



**A CRITIQUE OF WRITING SKILL PEDAGOGY
AT SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL AT
THE ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY**

**ABSTRACT
THESIS**

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

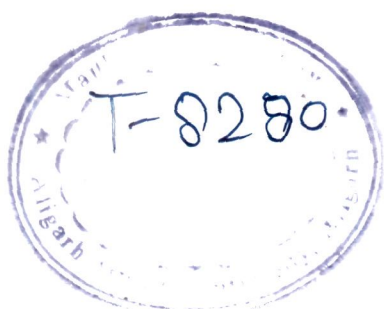
**Doctor of Philosophy
in
English**

BY

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**UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
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ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY
ALIGARH (INDIA)
2011**



ABSTRACT

Writing is a very important skill for the students of Senior Secondary learners. This present study has been divided into five chapters.

The first chapter is a detailed study of writing skills which includes the definition, of and scope and parameters required for this skill. Writing is the most complex of all the skills learnt in an individual's life and is acquired through a set of teaching strategies rendered in a formal environment or sometimes transmitted through one's language in a formal setting.

Writing appears to be a neat outlay of printed or written text on page but it is never so as writing represents the most complex activity which a writer undertaking, beginning from jottings and sentences to a coherent piece of text.

Writing consists of three stages which are as pre-writing, writing and revising. These stages, however, do not occur in a linear manner.

Generally speaking, writing is of four types: narrative, descriptive, expository and persuasive. Writing is approached through a set of parameters to make the written language acceptable and logical to its readers. These parameters consist of mechanics, grammar, syntax, contents, process, audience, purpose, word choice, organization etc.

The second chapter tries to critically analyze the prescribed textbooks of the Senior Secondary school at the Aligarh Muslim University.

Textbooks play an important role in the learning and teaching of writing skills. It is the use of textbooks which creates uniformity in the classroom. The textbooks prescribed at Senior Secondary level of Aligarh Muslim University consist of core and supplementary textbooks. The core textbooks *Hornbill* and *Flamingo* have given place to writing skills specifically while supplementary readers *Snapshots* and *Vistas* have focused more on reading skills and text-based questions.

The third chapter is a critical examination of the teaching of writing skills. English writing skills play an important role in the academic development as it provides students with the comprehensibility, fluency, ability and confidence which they would require in future. Therefore teaching of writing skills requires careful planning and implementation of strategies specified by the syllabus, apart from the other factors which affect and influence the learning and teaching of writing skills.

The fourth chapter is an assessment of students' writing skills through questionnaires circulated among teachers and students. The results have revealed the status of writing skills being taught and learnt. Some recommendations have also been suggested for the proper teaching and learning of the skill.

The fifth chapter which is the conclusion summarizes the preceding chapters and suggests some remedial measures for improving the teaching of writing skills.



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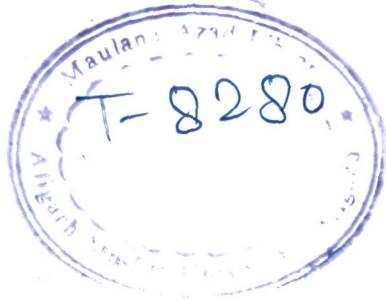
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27 SEP 2014



T8280

Dedicated
To my
Husband Linu and my son Lubin for their
love, patience and support.



2 May 2011

Certificate

This is to certify that Ms. Sherly G. Varghese carried out her doctoral study on the topic *A Critique of Writing Skill Pedagogy at Senior Secondary School Level at the Aligarh Muslim University* under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge, it is her original work and is suitable for submission for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language Teaching.

A.R. Kidwai

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Supervisor

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AMU

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This journey of stepping into miles to go before I sleep was already planned beforehand by the Lord God who has said

Your thoughts are not like my thoughts.

*Your ways are not like my ways. The
heavens are higher than the earth.*

*In the same way, my ways are higher
than your ways. And my thoughts
are higher than your thoughts.*

ISAIAH: 55, 8: 9

Really His ways were very different for me and I am indebted for all His grace and strength throughout this research project. This research could never have been given a shape without my supervisor Professor A. R. Kidwai to whom I owe my humble thanks. As it was his motivation that helped me to go further under any circumstance. I am privileged to work under his guidance. I am also thankful to Professor Farhatullah Khan whose guidance also helped me while deciding the topic.

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PREFACE

This study was carried out with the objective of analyzing the learning and teaching situations of English writing skills at Senior Secondary schools of Aligarh Muslim University. At this present time when globalization is at peak every activity requires written information in the form of letters, applications, notices, C.V/Biodata etc. Writing skill have become so important in regard to students' future needs that they should be properly imparted to students. It is necessary that teachers should be more vigilant, serious and develop ways to capture the interest of students through different techniques when undertaking this skill. As a wrong endeavor would lead to improper transference of the communication and thereby a wrong impression for the future writer.

As a student of this University, I thought that writing was one of the serious and a conscious activity and a wrong endeavor would lead my copy to be remarked which would be an embarrassment for me. Sometimes the topics too seemed not so interesting while at other times I was inclined towards my other subjects too much. And this attitude led me to neglect it or skip it off for which I faced consequence in my future endeavors. This topic of research was a very practical kind of thing as to critically analyze the present status, trends, situations, practices prevailing at senior secondary level regarding writing skills were very much similar to those which I as a student once faced. The present work has been divided into five chapters followed by a Bibliography.

Chapter 1 is a detailed introduction to the reader about Writing skills, its scope which includes the stages, approaches, types etc. and the

parameters through which it is dealt. Chapter 2 deals with the critical study of the present prescribed textbooks at senior secondary level. This chapter has also tried to analyze the efficiency of these textbooks through a set of criteria- based questions. Chapter 3 deals with the critical examination of the teaching of writing skills. This chapter has taken into account the factors such as the syllabus, attitude of teachers and learners, context, needs, motivation etc. which affect the learning and teaching of writing skills. Chapter 4 deals with an assessment of students' writing skills through a set of questionnaires, and its analysis and results. Chapter 5 contains the conclusion of the preceding chapters.

This study is based on facts and findings through empirical data and interviews collected from teachers and students. It therefore represents the underlying problems and confusion which teachers and students face owing to different factors which affect the learning and teaching of writing skills. This study may be of some help to researchers, teachers, and syllabus designers to consider the factors involved in the teaching of writing skills of English language.

CHAPTER ONE

Writing (Definitions, Scope and Parameters)

CHAPTER-ONE

WRITING SKILL: DEFINITIONS, SCOPE AND PARAMETERS

DEFINITIONS OF WRITING:

1. Writing today is not a frill for the few , but an essential skill for the many.¹

**The National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and
Colleges.**

2. Writing is a process, through which students can explore and discover their thoughts; constructing meaning and assessing it at the same time.²

Vivian Zamel

- 3) Good writing must spring from a desire to say something; it must proceed with superabundance, rather than with a dearth of something to say, and it must have within self a clear purpose other than that of fulfilling an imposed task.³

The Norwood Report, 1943

- 4) Writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously.⁴

Bell and Burnaby

- 5) Writing is not language but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks.⁵

Bloomfield

- 6) Writing was considered as an art, a creative act in which the process-the discovery of the true self –is as important as the product, the self discovered and expressed.⁶

Berlin

- 7) It is a purposeful selection and organization of experience.⁷

Nancy Arapoff

- 8) Writing is a transcription of the process of composing ideas; it is not the product of thought but its actualization and dramatization.⁸

Comprone

- 9) Writing is basically the process of communicating something (content) on paper to an audience. If the writer has nothing to say, writing will not occur.⁹

Aderumi Obuadiya

- 10) Writing is viewed as a process of generating and editing text within a variety of constraints such as structure, content, and goals.¹⁰

Collins and Gentner

WRITING AND ITS SCOPE:

Writing is an extended tool of language which is a species-specific and species-uniform revolutionary intellectual achievement by human civilization till date. It is supposed to have originated around ten thousand years ago and was branded as magical. Gradually, it became a necessity for the human existence, perhaps never to repeat the incident of Babel, and finally led to the birth of first system of schools of learning where the aim of the intellectuals was to mould the young minds to grasp this scriptural art and later inviting them to a world of scholars.

Writing is the most complex of all the skills learnt in an individual's life and is acquired at a later stage, through a set of teaching strategies rendered in a formal environment or sometimes transmitted through one's language in a formal setting. Writing as a process allows a writer to formulate and explore their ideas, imagination and vision, unseen and unheard by others. While going through the process he/she continuously discovers novel things which they have never imagined or thought of. It all leads them sometimes to take risks and sometimes to go in for some new experiments in order to represent their side of the story in the most legible form. In other words, we can compare the writer to a creator who is transforming vague words into ideas and finally into texts which were lying distorted somewhere in his/her mental asylum but with the help of his/her cognitive traits he/she unfolds them layer by layer for the intended pair of eyes and while going through the process the writer behaves as a mental juggler. He is seen as Harold Rosen (1981) says, "a lonely figure cut off from the stimulus and corrective of listeners." He must be a predicator of reactions and act on his predictions.¹¹

Almost every writing process is a solitary human activity in which the writer acts according to the knowledge acquired by him/her in their course of formal learning. The more the learner is skilled, the better he/she writes.

Writing is also assumed to be a visual representation of speech but this is true only up to a certain extent because there are symbols which can represent specific speech sounds but they are not always fixed. For example, the word representing 'ough' sounds phonetically different in the words such as through, rough, cough, dough, and bough. In fact writing and speech are different entities and tend to serve different functions. Speech has got the privilege to be a faster medium of communication, with quick feedback and response from listeners. Speech is supplemented with facial expression, gestures, intonation which tend to create a more direct effect on listeners. Though, writing is not acknowledged to have these features but it has got visual features which create a context out of lone words which are further added to grammatical, logical and lexical devices, as for example the use of punctuation marks, capital/bold letters, paragraphing, underlining, italicizing, use of cohesive devices, word order, use of paragraph heading etc. These features thereby make writing a complex skill in itself and require learners to follow the concept of writing not only at the surface level but also to grasp the conventions which control the art of writing.

Writing is a tool of thinking too, because when a writer writes, he/she pens down words and sentences which they have never thought of. Gradually new ideas are generated and he/she starts to write by solving various problems and identifying various issues. In simple words, we can say that the written form starts with the production of ideas followed by

the evaluation of the topic, the purpose for why it is written and the intended audience. Then the writer goes back to retrieve his/her knowledge related to the topic and then makes a decision of the information he/she is going to share with the reader. Next, he/she considers the conventions he/she is going to observe, followed by grammatical and other language conventions. Then he/she organizes his/her structure, ideas, content and purpose into a coherent piece and goes in for a first draft which is later checked for imperfections and finally after the checking process he/she produces his/her final draft.

Writing occurs out of different purposes and almost every writing is done with a purpose which may support his/her personal growth, sometimes professionally communicating with each other, and at other times academically maintaining the relations between teachers and students. It is the purpose which builds up a relation between the reader and the writer.

Writing is also seen as a way of communication too, because when a text is composed, it is done with a purpose and with a reader in mind and almost every classroom writing task is done to impress the eyes of teacher and no writing can appear until the writer intends to convey something to his/her reader. It is the permanency factor of the written language that gives the reader innumerable chances to confer what the writer intends to speak. This specific feature of written language acts as a communication to greater distances and time and thus gives the language an authority and power.

Writing tends to provide a variety in classroom activities because majority of classroom work is usually carried out in the spoken medium

and writing provides some time to relax both for the teachers and the students. It also helps students to learn language in a more relaxed manner and for some students practise in writing helps them to retain style and features which they probably cannot learn orally.

Most of the teachers of academic globe tend to assess writing on the basis of a high degree of organization, a high degree of accuracy, choice of vocabulary, grammar and coordination between sentences etc. This kind of assessment on the basis of some notions poses a serious threat to students' taking of risks because most of them feel that their teachers would easily evaluate their progress through the act of writing and a wrong endeavor would lead their copies to be marked in red or green ink. So it is usually seen that most of the students try to neglect their job when it comes to writing skill.

Writing presumes a well disciplined and controlled will power to concretize the knowledge acquired by the learners in due course of learning. Applebee, Langer and Mullis (1987) conclude through their three points that writing as a medium of thought processes which are basic to learning:

- a) To draw on relevant knowledge and experience in preparation for new activities.
- b) To consolidate and review new information and experience.
- c) To reformulate and extend knowledge.¹²

Writing requires a rich experience on the part of the writer before jumping into the act. Most of the school writing syllabuses are prepared to serve two basic purposes as pointed by Keys, 2000; Shanohon, 2004, Sperlin and Freedman, 2001 i.e. first to make use of basic writing sub-

skills like planning, drafting and revising while they write, and secondly to deepen and widen their knowledge regarding the subject.¹³

Though so much attention and thought to writing skills have been given, still in classroom context it is viewed as an instrument by which teachers and school authorities measure the learning and teaching taking place in an academic setting and while the only objective of almost the majority of students is to pass an examination.

Teachers put in so much hard labor, authorities plan the curriculum so that students improve their quality of writing yet most of the students tend to leave the school with a poor command over this skill. Researchers and experts working on this issue have pointed out the imperfections they have found in the rendering of the skill that even today, majority of teachers tend to keep their focus on the product received from students and avoid concentrating on how students reached those products and also many of them evaluate student's competence in writing on the basis of some preconceived notions of good writing which they carry from their generation. As a result, students view school writing as an imposed activity to acquire more knowledge about the language and not a process through which they may attain that knowledge.

Writing is commonly seen as a three stage process and these processes never occur in a linear manner. Instead there is a continuous overlapping of these stages during the process of writing. The writing process is marked by these three stages:

a) Pre-writing stage:

This is the stage where students tend to gather data and information before actually taking up pen or paper into their hands. The writer decides first the purpose of writing as it is the purpose which influences what the writer is going to put in his writing. Then there comes the reader because it is the reader/audience only that decides the style of writing. To put these two factors together, students' own experiences and observations they have acquired till now play a great role if they want to proceed further.

In this stage students generate ideas regarding the topic. That is why it is also known as the thinking stage. This stage helps learners plan about what he/she is going to put on and sometimes when he/she is not sure about something he/she can change the entire idea for some other alternative, thus reshaping and reformulating the previous plan.

Teachers should introduce activities before actual writing as these help students gain experience. D'Aoust (1986:7) states that "pre-writing activities generate ideas; they encourage a free flow of thoughts and helps students to discover both what they want to say and how to say it on paper."¹⁴ Pre-writing activities help students draw on relevant knowledge in order to concretize their raw ideas and thereby help them to write freely and confidently. It also captures the interest of students in the topic

or subject. Some of the pre-writing activities recommended in classroom context are: brainstorming, discussions, quizzes etc.

b) Writing stage:

It is the second stage of writing where the writer puts his/her thoughts into a first draft form. This is the stage where the writer moves on with pen, keeping in mind certain conventions such as mechanics, punctuation, social norms and the relevant information regarding the topic. During this stage the writer sometimes stops, sometimes looks back, sometimes adds certain details of the idea and sometimes rearranges those ideas etc. This stage does not mean some printed marks on a page but represents the most complex processes and mechanisms which a writer goes through. Good writing is not a kind of acquired talent by birth but can be acquired through practice and serious learning.

c) Re-writing stage:

This is the stage where the writer leaves no stones unturned to impress the eyes of his/her teacher or readers. This stage allows the writer to readjust and improvise his written text in the most acceptable way. He/she can add, delete and edit and sometimes can change large chunks of text so that his/her piece should gain clarity and unity. The writer then checks in for surface level errors of spelling, punctuation, grammar, vocabulary etc. Finally, before submitting he goes in for proof reading to check other minor mistakes and errors.

Re-writing comprises other subskills which play an important role. They are as reviewing, editing, revising and proof reading.

Though writing is seen here as divided into three separate stages and appears to follow a neat outlay of pre-writing, writing and revising stages. However, in reality it is never so because these stages continuously overlap each other as a writer moves on. He/she writes, and then stops to think then again moves back to confirm what he/she has written, then moves a little further and this process continues till he/she finishes his work. All these stages take different routes every time the writer struggles to represent a novel idea or wishes to share a piece of information with his/her readers. It is also proved by various researchers that different representations of these patterns are employed by different writers according to their level of competence.

We can analyze a learner's competence in writing skills on the basis of the following points:

- (a) write the letters of the alphabet at a reasonable speed;
- (b) spell the words correctly;
- (c) recall appropriate words and put them into sentences;
- (d) use appropriate punctuation marks;
- (e) link sentences with appropriate sentence connectors and sequence signals(e.g., pronouns, definite article, etc.);
- (f) organize thoughts and ideas in logical sequence and in suitable paragraphs around topic sentences
- (g) evaluate the significance of a word or a sentence in the overall context of the written passage;
- (h) use the form and register appropriate for the subject matter and the audience.¹⁵

Writing is a wider term and serves four basic purposes of learners which are: writing acts as a medium through which students get a chance to express their ideas, it helps learners to think and solve problems, it enables students to demonstrate their capability and competence in academic activities and finally it helps students understand the complexities of language.

Approaches to the Teaching of Writing:

Writing had been and continues to be central to all the English language curriculums carried out in schools as it is a source which gives them valid results regarding the learning and teaching of English in the classroom context. With the advent of language teaching methods writing gained focus as a separate skill like other skills in the series, but had to undergo fluctuations with every new methodology. The following approaches deserve special mention: -

1) Product Approach:

This approach is also known as the traditional approach to teaching writing skill because writing was taken up as a second-hand experience by almost every student who had been admitted to schools of learning. For writing comprised learning and memorizing endless lists of vocabularies, grammatical rules etc. of the target language and when the students got thorough with the items, they were asked to apply their acquired knowledge to the production of sentences translated into and out of the target language. Though writing was a major attention-oriented skill but it lacked any self involvement and self creation by the students. It was a mere reproduction of some rote-learnt sentences from the target language.

With the advent of Audio Lingual Method writing began to be seen as secondary to speech and writing was seen as a mere representation of the spoken form. Teaching fraternity now began to give importance to spoken form and almost every writing class asked those students as what (Lado:1964) pointed “to imitation and memorization of basic conversational sentences.”¹⁶

Sentences in the form of dialogues for situations were made to memorize through drills and practise and when the teachers felt that their students were familiar with the features, they were asked to reproduce them in situations such as at the bank, at the shop, meeting a friend etc. Gradually the experts realized that speech and writing were two different, separate entities having their own structure and mode of functioning and neither of the two can be substituted for the other. Soon writing was viewed as a skill having its own structure, content, style and rhetoric.

Writing was seen as a series of neat outlay of three stages where a writer begins his piece of writing by planning, in which he clearly makes a neat outline of what he is going to include then starts to write and finally checks for mistakes.

Classroom activities focused on tasks based on the models approach which would lead students to get exposed to different models of writing. These models were selected from a variety of genres such as expository, narrative, descriptive etc. and later students were asked to imitate the specific features represented by each type of text. Once the students got familiar they were asked to duplicate the same textual features represented by a particular genre in a multitude of settings and to apply the same form regardless of the content. What teachers intended through

this type of approach is clearly stated thus by Judy: (1980) “that by studying form first, students came to view form as a pre-existent organizational mould into which content is poured¹⁷” Finally, the students displayed their grasping skills in the form of near about duplication of a superior writing and teachers happily would be seen as Sheils (1986) brands “the distributer of sanction and judgments.¹⁸”

The teachers’ real role in product approaches came after the students submitted their written samples. They evaluated their students’ worth on the basis of some preconceived, dogmatic principles underlying their minds and expected what Mahon (1996) says “the production of neat, grammatically correct pieces of writing.¹⁹” And a slight deviation from the existent norms meant the pages to be critically analyzed and reflected with remarks.

With time it was felt that after so much of controlled emphasis on the accuracy of written product students tend to commit the same mistakes repeatedly. Academicians and researchers began to feel that imitation of others’ writing was leading their generation to produce a fake writing, thereby inhibiting the creativity of individual writing. So the demand for a newer and better approach began to arise.

Process Approach:

This approach emerged out of the dissatisfaction and faulty assumptions of the advocates of product approach. The paradigm shift from the existent educational norm was not an easy task as the existent pedagogy was already a prescribed pedagogy, central to almost all school curriculums for decades and a deviation from it meant a heinous crime committed in the academic world.

But the continuous repetitive mistakes, lack of involvement with assigned topics, inadequate development of ideas and, above all, lack of confidence in writing led the academicians to think of to reorganize their educational pattern. Meanwhile continuous research and discussions were being carried out which all seriously began with the founding of “Conference on College Composition and Communication in (1949-1950), then with the publication of *Research in Written Composition* by Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer in (1961) and finally the breakthrough case study by Janet Emig (1971) *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*²⁰” shifted the perception of almost majority of the writing teachers. The experiment conducted by Janet Emig revealed that the past assumptions regarding writing were faulty and writing was not at all as Taylor (1981) says “uni-directional process of recording pre-sorted, pre-digested ideas²¹” but was in real what Zamel (1983) says “non-linear, exploratory and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning.²²” It is the process of writing during which the writers tend to reflect a variety of behaviors. So, writing now began to be viewed as a process comprising sub-processes in its term and divided the existing three stages of writing into these sub-stages:

Murray (1987): Collect, focus, order, draft and clarify.²³

Graves (1983): Pre-writing, drafting, revision, editing and publishing.²⁴

White and Arndt (1991): Generating ideas, focusing, structuring, drafting, evaluating and reviewing.²⁵

These sub-stages are not fixed but vary according to the writer and text. On observing students while writing it seems that they all represent same

behaviors of planning, pausing, writing and revising but in reality this is not so as the number of times it occurs and the time period taken by each student on these stages differ according to the background and sophistication of writer's mental mechanism. The written sample produced by the writer is not seen as an end product in itself but views these samples as written by writers who are in making and there is ample scope for the not-so-skilled writers to develop their writing in the due course of learning. Nunan remarks: (1991) "No text can be perfect, but that a writer will get to perfection by producing, reflecting on, discussing and reworking successive drafts of a text."²⁶

Product approach gave way to teacher-centered classroom atmosphere where the authoritative power was in the hands of the teacher but process approach shifted the focus to a classroom which was more student-centered. The tasks carried out were designed in such a way that they not only motivated students to think but also were beneficial to students in terms of understanding the importance of each stage of writing.

Activities such as brainstorming, peer-conferencing, discussions and group/pair work were encouraged in classrooms so that students may have ample experience before they take up writing. Teachers now were seen as facilitators of the tasks rather than strict disciplinarians whose job was to issue judgments. The students' written samples were not evaluated but assessed through feedbacks and imperfections were conveyed through positive remarks and students were asked to produce successive drafts until they were competent enough to produce it perfectly.

This approach became a world wide famous approach and was launched and adopted by almost every public school since 1970s' and reports by

NAEP (1996) Trends in Writing (U.S Department of Education, 1996) concluded that “process approach to writing, in which planning, writing and revision through several drafts are practiced gives students the opportunity to write more and to employ editing strategies, which in turn affords them the opportunity to improve their mastery of.....writing conventions.²⁷” This approach was found quite successful at tertiary, secondary and primary school levels.

After some time this approach came under certain criticism as many of them felt that too much attention to the processes of creating texts has made product of writing into by-products and asking students to work on successive drafts leads them to deviate from the goal and peer evaluation leaves students with an unrealistic view of their writing.

Genre approach:

Swales has identified genre as “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes.”²⁸

This approach emerged after the need arose that there should be an approach which could in real sense enhance students’ writing skills and provide a solution to the shortcomings of process approaches which focused most of their attention on following the neat steps of pre-writing, writing, revising and editing. As Bizzell (1992) points out, that it overlooked the fact that thinking that generates writing actually “takes place in society, in interaction with other individuals, and this interaction modifies the individual’s reasoning,...and writing within society.”²⁹ So the focus of genre approach is to observe the social context into which a language is woven around, much like Hallidayan view of language as a functional unit which holds that language is not an isolated entity but

evolves out of a social purpose keeping in mind the conventions and norms of a particular culture and context thereby making appropriate meaning. A particular genre encompasses particular linguistic knowledge related to that genre by the contents of the matter, the relationship between the writer and his/her reader and the pattern of a particular genre, for example, if it is a business letter then the genre would require a different vocabulary, contents, conventions and rules etc.

Genre-based approach can be seen as an extension of product approaches as teachers try to draw students' attention towards the organizational and linguistic features reflected by a particular text type and sometimes provide with textual discovery tasks which are designed in such a way that students discover generic features and language forms occurring in a particular type of genre. It is observed that genre approach mostly focuses on the 'what' of writing rather than the 'how' of writing.

Classroom observations reveal that teachers provide students with model texts but with the teacher-guided analysis of the texts and then students were motivated to imitate features provided to them in these models. Teachers had to play an active role in this type of approach as they have to provide ample opportunity to the students so that they get familiar with the schemata associated with each genre and later students used these models as a reference when they attempt to compose a text.

The advocates of genre approach believe that the purpose of studying at schools is to make ample use of the knowledge learnt through imitation and exploration explicit as they learn.

Types of Writing:

1) Narrative Writing:

This type of writing requires students to narrate a particular incident or to tell a story by presenting events in an orderly and logical sequence. The primary aim of narrative writing is to inform the reader about the incidents related to a particular character through the eyes and words of the writer. The incident may have taken place either in present, past or will happen in future. Narrative writing can be in the form of fiction or non-fiction.

A writer while writing down his/her narrative piece must be aware and informed about the characters, expressions and tone of each character, relationships with other characters, background situation etc. In school context, narrative writing means to narrate an experience in the form of diary entries, short stories, essays, personal writing etc. Narrative piece of writing requires students to present their ideas in such a way that the ideas presented should look convincing and each detail should guide the readers to imagine the context created by them. In order to look more convincing they may describe geographical details such as time, dates etc.

Basically there are three types of narrative writing:

a) Personal narrative: This type of narrative requires the writer to share his/her experiences with the readers so that they feel personally sharing the experience with the writer. The writer can include personal description of things or sometimes may use dialogues to capture the interest of readers.

b) Imaginative Narrative writing: This type of writing involves writers to create a story of his/her own as creativity is central to this type

of writing. The writer has to present his creativity in such a way that the context, characters, situations look real to his/her readers.

c) Narrative Essay: This type of narrative writing has a somewhat planned layout, comprising introduction, main body and conclusion. These essays are always written with a defined point of view. The essays begin with the introduction which gives a brief overview of what is going to come, followed by the body of the essay which gives a detailed elaboration of the introduction in a chronological order and finally it is rounded off with a conclusion which reflects what all has been said before.

Narrative writing usually presented in the first person ("I") but sometimes third person (He/she/it) can also be used. The basic purpose of any narrative piece is to provide even the minute details of who, what, when, where, why and how of the subject in a chronological order. It is only then that it will sound convincing and appealing to the readers.

Here is an instance in point taken from *Hornbill*, (New Delhi: National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2006, pp. 3-4).

Paragraph 1: Narrative (The Portrait of a Lady: Khushwant Singh)

My grandmother, like everybody's grandmother, was an old woman. She had been old and wrinkled for the twenty years that I had known her. People said that she had once been young and pretty and had even had a husband, but that was hard to believe. My grandfather's portrait hung above the mantelpiece in the drawing room. He wore a big turban and loose-fitting clothes. His long, white beard covered the best part of his chest and he looked at least a hundred years old. He did not look the sort of person who would have a wife or children. He looked as if he could

only have lots and lots of grandchildren. As for my grandmother being young and pretty, the thought was almost revolting. She often told us of the games she used to play as a child. That seemed quite absurd and undignified on her part and we treated it like the fables of the Prophets she used to tell us.

She had always been short and fat and slightly bent. Her face was a criss-cross of wrinkles running from everywhere to everywhere. No, we were certain she had always been as we had known her. Old, so terribly old that she could not have grown older, and had stayed at the same age for twenty years. She could never have been pretty; but she was always beautiful. She hobbled about the house in spotless white with one hand resting on her waist to balance her stoop and the other telling the beads of her rosary. Her silver locks were scattered untidily over her pale, puckered face, and her lips constantly moved in inaudible prayer. Yes, she was beautiful. She was like the winter landscape in the mountains, an expanse of pure white serenity breathing peace and contentment.

My grandmother and I were good friends. My parents left me with her when they went to live in the city and we were constantly together. She used to wake me up in the morning and get me ready for school. She said her morning prayer in a monotonous sing-song while she bathed and dressed me in the hope that I would listen and get to know it by heart; I listened because I loved her voice but never bothered to learn it. Then she would fetch my wooden slate which she had already washed and plastered with yellow chalk, a tiny earthen ink-pot and a red pen, tie them all in a bundle and hand it to me. After a breakfast of a thick, stale chapatti with a little butter and sugar spread on it, we went to school. She carried several stale chapattis with her for the village dogs.

My grandmother always went to school with me because the school was attached to the temple. The priest taught us the alphabet and the morning prayer. While the children sat in rows on either side of the verandah singing the alphabet or the prayer in chorus, my grandmother sat inside reading the scriptures. When we had both finished, we would walk back together. This time the village dogs would meet us at the temple door. They followed us to our home growling and fighting with each other for the chapattis we threw to them.³⁰

2. Descriptive Writing:

This type of writing portrays or paints a picture with the use of vivid imagery about someone or something. Most of the descriptive writing seeks to enable the reader to share the writer's experience regarding a person, place, object or an event. It is through descriptive writing that the writer shares his/her emotions and attitude towards the subject. While describing a subject the writer should have ample and explicit knowledge regarding the subject as it is only then the writer is able to describe the subject in a more convincing way which in turn will capture the attention of the reader. A writer has to include sensory words, phrases, metaphors and sounds of words which add more clarity to the subject.

Descriptive writing is carried out in the following two ways-

- a) **Subjective description:** The writer shares his/her experience directly as an onlooker would describe a fact, event or a scene. In other words, the writer presents his mental picture of the subject.
- b) **Objective description:** The writer not only provides the reader with factual description but also its significance and meaning and

sometimes he/she offer his/her own point of view regarding the subject.

Descriptive writing is seen in writing tasks such as narratives or stories, reports, character sketches, factual description, advertising, personal experiences and poetry etc.

Here is an instance in point taken from Xavier Pinto, *ICSE English Grammar And Composition*, (New Delhi: Evergreen Publications, 1995, p. 303).

Paragraph 2: Descriptive (Description of a scene in a crowded bus, Shiva Naipaul: North of South, 1978)

It is raining hard, streams of water gushing down the window glass. Through the blur I can see there are many people fighting for the right of admission. Some in desperation are scaling the sides of the bus, vainly attempting to haul themselves on to the roof.

The bus is, perhaps, more crowded than usual. Id, the feast which breaks the austerities of Ramadan, is close at hand, and, no doubt, many foreigners are returning home for the occasion. There is a fair sprinkling of tourist on the bus-a party of well dressed Germans carrying expensive cameras; a sedate English couple; a scattering of American hippies. The rain eases. Gradually, the civil wars that have been raging in the aisle subside. Those who cannot find a seat resign themselves to having to stand. Punctually at 10:15 a.m., the bus pulls out of the station yard. The ride from Malindi to Lamu is a long one. It can last between eight and ten hours-or, if the bus breaks down, one may never arrive.

The woman sitting next to me is tending three children, one of them, a babe in arms. They are being kept quiet by an endless supply of food. The

baby's mouth is permanently clamped to its mother's breast. The toddler chews and sucks a piece of sugarcane. The eldest child dips chunks of bread into a plastic cup filled with milk; the sludge oozes out of the corners of her mouth and drips down the front of her red dress. The rain dies away. I open the window a crack, inserting my nose in the gap. Casually, the woman leans over and slides the glass shut again. It is something I have become accustomed to; and I do not contest the issue....A man in a cream-colored, ankle-length shift begins to sing. The refrain is taken up and the atmosphere, so recently rancorous, becomes mildly festive. The toddler looks up hungrily at his mother; he has finished his stick of sugarcane, whose mangled remains lie scattered about our feet. She takes out a banana and presents it to him. A congenial little slum is being created around us. She smiles happily at me.³¹

3. Expository Writing:

This type of writing tries to explain, describe, and give factual information regarding a subject. The information provided may be a new experience for the reader. Therefore the writer has to provide a step by step detailed account of the procedures and should explicitly reveal the causes behind any event or situation without expressing his/her bias. Most of the expository pieces of writing convey information about the subject which is difficult to understand and is presented while using an orderly analysis of parts and sometimes with familiar illustrations.

Within an academic context expository writing requires students to explain such questions like what was done. , what was it like? How it operates? How it developed, how you felt, what do you think? etc. These questions demand an explicit explanation about the topic. The simplest

expository piece requires students ‘to enumerate’ a given topic and if it is more complex, the topic requires ‘analysis and definition’ followed by ‘classification and division’. Expository writing is used to report facts, to define terms, to explain a process, to give instructions, to summarize ideas etc.

Here is an instance in point taken from Rise B. Axelrod and Charles R. Cooper, *Concise Guide to Writing*. (Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2009, p. 101).

Paragraph 3: **Expository (Cannibalism: It still exists): Linh Kieu Ngo**

Cannibalism, the act of human beings eating human flesh has a long history and continues to hold interest and create controversy. Many books and research reports offer examples of cannibalism, but a few scholars have questioned whether it actually was ever practiced anywhere, except in cases of ensuring survival in times of famine or isolation. Recently some scholars have tried to understand why people in the west have been so eager to attribute cannibalism to non-westerners (Barker, Hulme, and Iversen). Cannibalism has long been a part of American popular culture. For example, Mark Twain’s “Cannibalism in the Cars” tells a humorous story about cannibalism by well-to-do travelers on a train stranded in a snowstorm, and cannibalism is still a popular subject for jokes (“Cannibal Jokes”)

If we assume there is some reality to the reports about cannibalism, how can we best understand this concept? Cannibalism can be broken down into two main categories: exocannibalism, the eating of outsiders or foreigners, and endocannibalism, the eating of members of one’s own social group (Shipman 70). Within these categories are several functional

types of cannibalism, three of the most common being survival cannibalism, dietary cannibalism, and religious and ritual cannibalism.

Survival cannibalism occurs when people trapped without food have to decide “whether to starve or to eat fellow humans” (Shipman 70). The most famous example of survival cannibalism in American history comes from the diaries, letters, and interviews of survivors of the California-bound Donner Party, who in the winter of 1846 were snowbound in the Sierra Nevada Mountains for five months. Thirty-five of eighty-seven adults and children died, and some of them were eaten (Hart 116-117; Johnsor).

Unlike survival cannibalism, in which human flesh is eaten as a last resort after a person has died, in dietary cannibalism humans are purchased or trapped for food and then eaten as a part of a culture’s traditions. In addition, survival cannibalism often involves people eating other people of the same origins, whereas dietary cannibalism usually involves people eating foreigners.

In the Mianmin society of the west Sepik interior of Papua New Guinea, villagers do not value human life over that of pigs or marsupials because human flesh is part of their normal diet (Poole 7).

Religious or ritual cannibalism is different from survival and dietary cannibalism in that it has a ceremonial purpose rather than one of nourishment. Sometimes only a single victim is sacrificed in a ritual, while at other times many are sacrificed. For example, the Bangala tribe of the Congo River in central Africa honors a deceased chief or leader by purchasing, sacrificing, and feasting on slaves (Sagan 53). The number of

slaves sacrificed is determined by how highly the tribe members revered the deceased leader.

Members of developed societies in general practice none of these forms of cannibalism, with the occasional exception of survival cannibalism when the only alternative is starvation. It is possible, however, that our distant-past ancestors were cannibals who through the eons turned away from the practice. We are, after all, descended from the same ancestors and survival cannibalism shows that people are capable of eating human flesh when they have no other choice.³²

4) Persuasive Writing:

This type of writing is usually undertaken in order to convince the readers about a position, opinion or a belief. The writer's objective behind such type of writing is to make the readers endorse his/her interpretation of the fact or an idea. In order to persuade readers the writer provides relevant facts and details through examples which would act as support to his/her stance so as to capture the mind of the readers.

Persuasive writing includes three basic details:

- a) Thorough knowledge of the subject before presenting an opinion.
- b) Evidence which should look genuine and authentic.
- c) Use of persuasive techniques.

A persuasive writer in order to appeal to his/her audience relates his stance through facts and figures, emotions, reasons and sometimes through ethics. This type of writing is popular in forms like debates, business letters, letter to the editor, advertisements, literary analysis etc.

Here is an instance in point taken from James Heard and Ted Tucker, *Advanced Writing*, p. 79, retrieved from *teflbootcamp.com*.

Paragraph 4: Persuasion Paragraph (Euthanasia)

Euthanasia is a merciful and humane termination of prolonged suffering, and not murder, as some proponents insist. There is no sane reason why a person with a terminal illness should have to suffer the agony, humiliation, and degradation of a slow, certain death when other alternatives are available. Certainly no one wants to die, but like taxes, it is unavoidable. Life is indeed a precious gift that should be cherished and celebrated. For those unlucky souls afflicted with a painful terminal illness, they should have the option of passing quietly, peacefully, and quickly. What rational person would choose the never-ending torment that comes with the slow, excruciating death of a terminal illness? Loved ones too suffer from a prolonged terminal illness. They experience the grief, agony, and pain of losing someone every time they visit the hospital. This continued exposure creates emotional, physical, and psychological stress that is unnecessary and in most cases probably unwanted. Prolonged terminal illness also puts a great burden on family's financial resources. With a high cost of medical care today, this could (and many times does) create a financial crisis that takes years to overcome. In addition, time and resources of the hospital are inefficiently utilized. Medical facilities may be turning away patients that need urgent care if their beds are filled with patients that are afflicted with incurable diseases. This in turn could create grave social problems for a community. We are all going to die, let us hope that we have the option of going out serenely.³³

Teaching of writing skills at senior secondary level in the context of Aligarh Muslim University

Senior Secondary level is the most crucial stage in the educational hierarchy as it is the intermediate stage where students are prepared for higher education or to face the global competitiveness laid down at work place. This level covers ages from 17 to 18 years which are remarked as late adolescent and comprise classes XI and XII. The National Curriculum Framework in 1975, recommended a common pattern of curriculum to be carried out in all Indian schools till class X followed by the first qualifying examination which would lead students to enter different streams like humanities, commerce or science (*Education Commission 1964-1966, Kothari Commission*). This diversification and classification in senior secondary level seeks to prepare students for University education and other job requirements.

English language as a subject is compulsory in every stream and almost 5-6 periods per week lasting up to 40-45 minutes are devoted by the teachers of every Indian school. However, when asked about the time spent especially for writing skill, the answer was: a single period in week or twice or thrice a month. Though the fundamental aim of education is to develop writing skills but it is the most neglected skill by many students. Though considerable research and adaptation of research findings have been proposed but its adequate implementation is never carried out in the classroom context.

Aligarh Muslim University (A.M.U) was established in 1875 as Mahomedan Anglo Oriental (MAO) by its founder, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. The origin of A.M.U can be traced back to school founded by Sir

Syed on 24 May 1875 at Aligarh. Within a span of almost two years the foundation stone of a college was laid down by Lord Lytton. The College started with two separate departments which were the English department and the Oriental department. This College was established with the aim to raise an institution which would impart Western education through English language for the upliftment of Muslims and members of all communities.

Today this institution is recognized as a premier central University having several faculties and schools run by it and draws thousands of students each year from across the world. Senior Secondary schools are also a part of Aligarh Muslim University having its own premise and faculty both for boys and girls.

Senior Secondary school (Boys) was established through the University Act and came into existence in 1985 and nearly 2000 boys are admitted to different streams run by the faculty. The selection is made on the basis of a national level entrance held in different states of the country. Senior Secondary (Girls) came into existence around (1987) and nearly 1000 girl students have been pursuing different streams in the faculty. They too are selected on the basis of a national level entrance test.

The medium of instruction in senior secondary schools is mostly English language as the books and supplementary materials are provided in English and both the teachers and students feel comfortable to carry out instructions in English. The syllabus structure of senior secondary schools is recommended by the C.B.S.E (Central Board of Secondary Education), as it is the national board of school education in India.

C.B.S.E has prescribed two books by N.C.E.R.T (National Council of Education, Research and Training) for class XI and class XII. The recommended books for class XI are *Hornbill* and *Snapshots* and *Flamingo* and *Vistas* for class XII. These books have given a thorough weightage to writing skills and the syllabus aims to promote higher order language skills thereby preparing students to learn language skills for their future use.

The syllabus of writing section for class XI covers 20 marks weightage and 40 periods are assigned while advanced writing skills recommended in class XII cover 35 marks weightage and 70 periods are assigned to complete the syllabus. The faculty appointed to teach English at senior secondary schools are educated, well trained and majority of the teachers have many years of teaching experience. Most of them take up writing skills primarily by following the guidelines provided to them through textbooks and they also draw upon other sources. Almost all of them are comfortable with the writing syllabus and feel that it is the time constraint and pressure of completing the syllabus by a particular point of time which compels them to finish the course in a hurry. Therefore they feel that they cannot approach each and every writing task with the same zest and liveliness. Not only this, most of the teachers say that how could they carry on with pre-writing, post writing tasks and other problems in a 45 minute period? Some of the teachers have noted that students from science and commerce background tend to be more serious towards their main subjects and are not interested in attending English classes regularly. However, there are some students who are serious in taking up these skills and maintain the class record of the tasks performed in classrooms.

Writing skills are taught by the teachers in different way, for some have assigned specific periods for taking up the skills, some do so after completing the lessons, while some take it up when they find it suitable. Others gave assignments on the topics. Overall classroom observation reveals that most of the teachers adopt a traditional mode of teaching writing skills and try to imitate and implement how they were taught these skills. However some of the teachers have tried to move away from the traditional mode but could not carry it out in every writing class owing to the local context, syllabus, time, level/background of students, large class etc. Even majority of teachers feel that they could not carry out the feedback sessions on every written assignment owing to the above factors so they try to implement substitutes like peer correction, asking some students to read aloud and then commenting on his/her performance.

Majority of students studying at senior secondary level know the importance of writing skills for their future but do not take them seriously as compared to other subjects. They only have the intention of passing their examination and therefore just before their examination it is seen that majority draws upon readymade guide books. The result reveals that most of them were able to pass and managed to get 60% - 65% marks. Some students have complained that their teachers do not motivate them and the writing topics seem to be not so interesting. Other students felt that they already know about the specific writing skills as they had already studied them in their previous classes.

It seems that there lies a wide gap between the needs of students and aims of the system and to fill this gap some urgent steps have to be taken up. Teachers and school administration have to develop ways to capture the

interest level of students and also students have to be made aware of the importance of these writing skills for their future.

Parameters of Writing:

Any piece of writing in order to be logical to the reader requires the intervention of some specific features to make it acceptable. A slight mistake on the part of the writer to handle these features carefully would always result in the improper transference of communication of the language. Smith (1982) has distinguished two aspects of writing they are as composition which comprises the generation of ideas, making efforts to put them together, choosing vocabulary, grammatical style and the selection of words. Transcription includes the concretization of the ideas emerged at the composition stage.³⁴ It includes the effort on the part of writer to put the thoughts into a whole text comprising of paragraphs, punctuation, spelling etc. These skills are also referred as secretarial skills. Ann Raimes has provided some features which writers have to master in order to produce a piece of acceptable writing. These features are:

- 1) Mechanics which comprise handwriting, spelling and punctuation etc.
- 2) Grammar comprising rules for verbs, agreement, articles, pronouns, etc.
- 3) Syntax comprises the manner in which sentences are arranged together to form larger units. It includes sentence structure, sentence boundaries, stylistic choices, etc.
- 4) Content which takes into account relevance, clarity, originality, logic, etc.

- 5) The writer's process which includes getting ideas, getting started, writing drafts, revising etc.
- 6) Audience includes the reader/s who would be going through the written text.
- 7) Purpose which includes the reason for which the text is being written.
- 8) Word choice comprises vocabulary, idiom, tone etc.
- 9) Organization which includes paragraphs, topic and support, cohesion and unity.³⁵

These features are a set of basic requirements which learners and teachers have to consider in order getting a clear, fluent, and effective communication of ideas. Students have to learn the basic formats, style, purposes, grammatical and lexical terms for the variety of writing tasks which they are going to handle, as each format and style changes according to the writing genre.

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CHAPTER TWO

A Critical Study of Senior Secondary Level Textbooks at the Aligarh Muslim University Senior Secondary Schools

CHAPTER 2

A CRITICAL STUDY OF TEXTBOOKS AT SENIOR SECONDARY LEVEL

“The textbook is an almost universal element of English language teaching. Millions of copies are sold every year, and numerous aid projects have been set up to produce them in various countries...No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook.”

(Hutchinson and Torres, 1994)

English as language has acquired an important place in the Indian curriculum. Almost all the national boards have given special place to it and have made it as one of the compulsory subjects which students have to pass before being promoted to the next class. These boards on the recommendations of the Ministry of Human Resource Development have introduced newer textbooks, of which the aim is to motivate students to learn English by developing their language skills. With the introduction of language teaching methods the textbooks basically focused attention on reading and writing skills and the tasks associated with writing skills concentrated on the practice of drills such as repetition drill, single substitution drill, double substitution drill, multiple substitution drill, concord drill and question-answer drill, etc.

Textbooks play an important role in the learning and teaching procedures adopted in classrooms as these are said to be the ‘structuring tool.’² They provide a framework within which both the teachers and students perform their functions. It is the use of textbooks which ensures uniformity between teachers and students and among students. In the context of India where a single teacher has to maintain large classes, textbooks act as a source of support to the majority of teachers.

Cunningsworth (1995, 7) summarizes the role of materials (particularly course books) in language teaching thus:

- a resource for presentation materials
- a source of activities for learner practice and communication interaction.
- a reference source for learners on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and so on.
- a source of stimulation and ideas for classroom activities.
- a syllabus (where they reflect learning objectives that have already been determined).
- a support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence.³

Teaching materials are crucial to writing instructions as these help stimulate, model and support writing tasks carried out in classrooms. These materials when studied and practised carefully help learners with input and exposure which they require in comprehending different writing genres. Textbooks help the teachers and learners to move in a sequential manner by covering important aspects of writing genres

recommended in the syllabus. This sequential experience related to writing genre helps both the teachers and learners to clarify and practise one aspect of the writing genre at a time without creating any confusion.

Textbooks act as a guide to almost all teachers who are new to the teaching profession and also even the most experienced teachers find the recommended books to be a source of ideas for their course structure, practice activities and language models. However, over-dependence on the textbooks sometimes leads teachers to mistake them for curriculum. No textbook can be regarded as perfectly suitable to a particular context, as majority of the textbooks when written are usually aimed at imaginary learners with a particular level of ability. There are times when the aim of the writer may not tally with the aim of the students or there may be students who would not be proficient or competent enough to match the aims of the writer of the textbook so this particular textbook may not be suitable for some students.

The advantages and disadvantages of textbooks for the writing teacher may be summarized thus:

Advantages:

Framework- gives course a sense of structure.

Syllabus- guides to the contents to be covered.

Resource- ready-made and tested texts and tasks.

Reference- source of language information.

Economy- cheaper than in-house materials.

Convenience- easy to use, store, and carry

Guidance- support and ideas for new teachers.

Autonomy- facilitates out-of-class work.

Face validity- students see course as credible.

Disadvantages:

Inadequacy- fails to address individual needs.

Irrelevance- contents may not relate to needs.

Restrictive- inhibits teacher's creativity.

Homogeneity- fails to address in-class variety.

De-skilling- teachers merely mediate materials.

Inauthentic- texts and readings often invented.

Intuitive- models based on authors' intuitions.

Cultural inappropriacy- unsuitable contents.

Cost- may be a financial burden to students.⁴

The textbooks recommended for Senior Secondary schools of Aligarh Muslim University are produced by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), a body which works in accordance with the set of guidelines provided to them by the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005. The Core English syllabus is prescribed for all streams (Arts, Commerce and Science) and comprises two set of textbooks each for class XI and class XII.

These Textbooks claim that they have tried to frame their contents on the policies recommended by (NCF), 2005. The policies state that whatever students learn through syllabus and textbooks in classrooms should be associated with their life outside i.e. the knowledge which they are going to receive in classrooms should help them in their real life situations. The

motive behind is to discourage students from the ongoing tradition of bookish learning which exists and creates a wide gap between school, home and community. The textbooks further claim they have also tried to discourage students from rote learning and have maintained sharp boundaries between different subject areas. The textbooks have tried to move into the direction of child-centered system of education which has been outlined in the National Policy of Education (1986).

The textbooks ask the Principals and teachers of schools to motivate students to reflect on their learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. The textbooks also urge teachers to understand that given space, time and freedom the students generate new ideas out of the information which is passed on to them by adults. Further, teachers are told that they should not consider these prescribed textbooks as a sole basis for examination, as their over-use may inhibit them not to explore for other sites of learning. Teachers are also advised to consider their students to be active participants in learning as it would help them to inculcate creativity and take necessary initiatives to promote active learning in classrooms.

The textbooks further say that while considering these aims there should be a change in the school routines and their mode of functioning. There should be flexibility in the daily time-table so that the number of teaching periods should in actual sense devoted to teaching only. For the methods used for teaching and evaluation of the content would determine how much this text is able to make students' life happy at school.

The textbooks also mention that the syllabus designers behind these textbooks have tried to understand the problem of curriculum burden and

thereby tried to restructure and reorient knowledge at different stages and apart they have also given a greater consideration to child psychology and the time available to teaching. The textbook seeks to enhance higher priority and space to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups and activities requiring hands-on experience.

The first set of textbooks comprise two books recommended in for class XI are:

- (a) **Hornbill**, *Textbook in English for class XI* (core course), National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2006.

About The Book:

The textbook claims that this particular textbook recommended for class XI is based on the English syllabus proposed by the National Curriculum Framework, 2005.

The textbook is a hard paper bound book. The front cover displays an art work, representing a bird and the last page displays a picture of a hornbill which is followed by an introduction and a fact about hornbill. The book costs around Rs 25.

The textbook has been developed by experts in the field of education, having years of experience. The textbook development committee comprises the following:

Chairperson, Advisory Group for Textbooks in Languages

Professor Namwar Singh, formerly Chairman, School of Languages,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Chief Advisor

R. Amritavalli, Professor, Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL), Hyderabad

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The textbook claims that it aims to help learners to develop their proficiency in English by making use of the language as an instrument of abstract thought and knowledge acquisition. The textbook has been specifically divided into two sections which are: Reading Skills and Writing skills, a series of activities and exercises have been listed under the two skills. The Reading skills section covers from page No. 1 to page No 86 and the Writing skill section covers from page No 87 to page No 118. The textbook claims that the writing skills have been designed in a way to prepare the students for an independent writing which a school leaver will need for academic as well as real life purposes in future. The

textbook provides guidance in a step by step manner, which will help students to make notes, summarize, draft letters and write short essays as well as pay attention to the form, content and process of writing.

The writing skill section starts with a saying by a student of what he/she thinks about writing, followed by certain points which should be considered by the students in order to write effectively. The first skill to be discussed under writing skills section is Note Making. Students are introduced to what is Note making and followed by an example, which is displayed in a step by step process and finally students are asked to carry out examples themselves. They are provided necessary guidance at the end of the exercise to be carried out by them.

The next skill discussed is Summarising. Students are introduced to the topic through an example and later asked to summarise a text at the end. The next skill in the series is Sub-titling. Students are provided an article from a newspaper which starts off with a title and at the end students are asked to carry out with certain activities.

The fourth skill is Essay writing. Students are introduced to brainstorming through a diagram which is displayed and then they are shown the expansion of the points displayed in the brainstorming diagram. Finally, are provided with an example of an essay which has been prepared taking into account the expanded sentences. Students are introduced to the requisites needed to write an essay, followed by a paragraph and a passage analysis for students to read and then a flow chart depicting important points of the paragraph. At the end students are given some topics for essay writing and asked to follow the steps listed above.

The fifth skill under the writing skill section is a wide topic of Letter writing. The skill starts with an introduction to letter writing followed by detailed description in a step by step manner: how to write formal letters, what points should be kept in mind. The format of a formal letter is also shown as an example to students. The next type of letter writing is informal letters. Students are provided with the formats for them to follow. The other topic included under this skill is Job Application. A sample advertisement from a daily newspaper is shown as an example and students are provided with the general format of a resume/curriculum vitae followed by a covering letter of the c.v. and certain activities are provided at the end for students to carry out.

The next skill in the writing skill section is Creative Writing. It starts with an introduction of what is creative writing all about, followed by a brief paragraph for students to study and then an analysis of the paragraph is shown. Some other examples too are shown and students are introduced to various literary devices. Through these examples and finally at the end activities are provided which asks students to write a short story, a poem, imagining things from certain words and exploring features associated to poem and short story.

The sub-skills introduced in the Writing skill section are very important in terms of the future needs of the students. Majority of students are comfortable with the sub-skills but creative writing seems to be difficult to those students who are studying this genre of English for the first time.

The book has laid greater emphasis on guided writing. The skills are arranged from simpler to complex forms. However, students feel that they want to have more interesting topics and colourful presentation in

their textbooks. Teachers too feel that some new activities which could raise the interest level of students should be introduced.

(b) Snapshots: *Supplementary Reader in English for class XI* (core course), National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2006.

About The Book:

This supplementary reader is based on the English syllabus for class XI which is prepared along the lines suggested by the National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 2005. This textbook is a hard paper bound book. The front cover depicts some pictures in a film roll and some titles of stories are presented. The textbook is in black and white print and costs around Rs 20 which is an affordable price in Indian context. This textbook has not specifically given importance to writing skill but has given more importance to reading skill.

The book says that the students pursuing their senior secondary are at a stage where they try to understand themselves and the society in which they live around so literature helps in a greater deal to mould their minds. *Snapshots* focuses on literature and aims that the learners should be encouraged to read the stories and later study the themes, narrative patterns and stylistic features. As students read these stories extensively it will help them to imbibe language in an unconscious manner. There are eight stories in the text and have a list of questions based on these texts so that students mostly carry out text based writing on these stories. The textbook committee for this book is the same committee which has recommended the core textbook.

The set of two textbooks recommended for class XII are:

(c) **Flamingo: Textbook in English for class XII** (core course).
National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2006.

About The Book:

The textbook claims that it has followed the design of class XI textbook *Hornbill* published in 2006. The contents of the textbook like the contents of *Hornbill* are not divided into Reading and Writing skills but here the contents are divided into Prose and Poetry sections. The textbook further claims that the idea behind introducing these two aspects is to make the learners aware of the variety of genres, themes and writing from different parts of the world. The tasks at the end of each unit provide opportunities for the development of language skills. The book costs Rs 30.

The textbook development committee comprises these persons:

Chairperson, Advisory Group for Textbooks in Languages

Professor Namwar Singh, formerly Chairman, School of Languages,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

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The Prose section of the textbook has not taken writing skills as an individual skill but has integrated it with other skills which are related to a text. It has also introduced students to a new form of writing i.e. “media writing” through one of its chapters “The Interview” Part I and II. Students are also asked to work on vocabulary and sentence patterns before attempting the writing tasks.

The exercises listed under the prose section are:

1. Understanding the text
2. Talking about the text
3. Working with words

4. Noticing form
5. Writing
6. Things to do

About The Unit

1. Theme
2. Sub-Theme
3. Reading Comprehension
4. Talking About The Text
5. Working With Words
6. Noticing Form
7. Writing
8. Things to Do

It is to be noted that writing tasks have been assigned at the end and is divided into two sections. The first writing part of the exercise specifically asks students to carry out the writing tasks and the writing section assigned in *About The Unit* highlights points of focus which students have to keep in mind while dealing with tasks specified in the above writing section.

The writing tasks prescribed by the textbooks are:

The first chapter in the prose section is a Short Story, “The Last Lesson” by Alphonse Daudet.

There are three specific tasks which are:

- a) Write a notice for your school bulletin board. Your notice could be an announcement of a forthcoming event, or a requirement to be fulfilled, or a rule to be followed.
- b) Write a paragraph in about 100 words arguing for or against having to study three languages at school.
- c) Have you ever changed your opinion about someone or something that you had earlier liked or disliked? Narrate what led to change your mind.

The points of focus specified in “About the Unit” section are:

- a) Practice in a functional genre, e.g., bulletin.
- b) Argumentative writing on a topic related to life at school.
- c) Narrating subjective experience discussing personal likes and dislikes.

The second chapter is a non-fictional biography, “The Lost Spring” a story of stolen children by Anees Jung. There is no writing section specified in this chapter but the textbook has asked students in “Things to do” section to write a paragraph in about 200-250 words and an example of how to begin the paragraph has been provided to students.

The writing section in “About the Unit” section focuses on

- a) Note Making and reporting.

The third chapter “Deep Water” is an autobiography by William Douglas. There are two specified writing tasks which are:

- a) Doing well in any activity, for example, a sport, music, dance or painting, riding a motorcycle or a car, involves a great deal of

struggle. Most of us are very nervous to start until we gradually overcome our fears and perform well.

Write an essay of about five paragraphs, recounting such an experience. Try to recollect minute details of what caused the fear, your feelings, the encouragement you got from others or the criticism.

You could begin with the last sentence of the essay you have just read- “At last I felt released –free to walk the trails and climb the peaks and to brush aside fear.”

- b) Write a short letter to someone you know about your having learnt to do something new.

About the Unit

1. First person narration of a personal experience.
2. Letter- writing on personal learning achievements.

The fourth chapter “The Rattrap” is a short story by Selma Lagerlof and the fifth chapter “Indigo”, a biography by Louis Fischer assign no specific writing skills to be carried out.

The Sixth chapter “Poets and Pancakes” is an autobiography by Asokamitran. The writing section asks students:

- a) You must have met some interesting characters in your neighbourhood or among your relatives. Write a humorous piece about their idiosyncracies. Try to adopt the author’s rambling style, if you can.

About the Unit

Practice writing in the humorous style.

The seventh chapter “The Interview” by Christopher Silvester has introduced students to media writing.

a) If the interviewer Mukund Padmanabhan had not got the space in the newspaper to reproduce the interview verbatim, he may have been asked to produce a short report of the interview with the salient points.

Write this report for him.

(The teacher should be able to help the pupils in what to include and what can be omitted. We could also provide a short report of an interview as a sample.)

About the Unit

Transfer of information from one genre to another, e.g., interview to report

The eighth chapter “Going Places” by A. R. Barton is a short story.

- Think of a person who you would like to have as your role-model.
- Write down the points to be discussed or questions to be asked, if you were asked to interview that person on a television show.

About the Unit

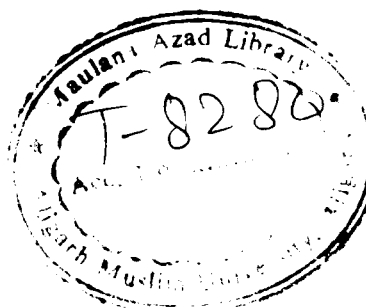
No assignment is specified.

The poetry section has not given attention to writing skills in particular but has given students exposure to aesthetic writing and has tried to evoke subjective response of students through the language of poetry.

(d) Vistas: *Supplementary Reader in English for class XII* (core course) National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2006.

About the Book:

This book is devoted to reading skills and the textbook aims that students should enjoy reading and appreciate the best examples of writing and understand the society in which they live in. The textbook has made it possible by presenting a variety of themes and genres of writing which are: scientific fantasy, political satire, and adventure, to ethical and moral issues and personal conflicts. This book costs Rs 25 and has a hard paper bound cover with a black and white picture of building and trees. The title is printed in green colour and the back cover represents some lines from *Endymion- Book II* by John Keats. The textbook committee for this book is the same which has edited the core textbook, *Flamingo*.



An assessment of the current prescribed core textbooks (*Hornbill* and *Flamingo*) regarding writing skill will reveal more clearly about their suitability for the students and teachers. The criteria selected to assess the textbook have been selected from *Some Criteria for Writing Textbook Assessment*, suggested in *Second Language Writing* by Ken Hyland.

How do the aims and approaches of the textbooks match in the degree of correspondence to students' needs and expectations, relevance to course goals and instructors' teaching philosophies and preferences and the degree of cultural appropriacy?

Majority of students studying at senior secondary aim to go for higher education while some aim for jobs and for this they need proficiency in English. The textbooks also seek to build greater confidence and proficiency in learners' writing skills which would help them retain confidence once they leave their school premises. The aims and approaches also match the course goals as these emphasize to build greater confidence and proficiency in the use of writing skill which is necessary for social and academic purposes.

Majority of teachers are aware of the aims and approaches of the textbook and prefer to match the aims and approaches prescribed in the textbook so that it does not create confusion. However, teachers feel that whenever they find that the textbook has not supplied students the required knowledge, they explore other resources in order to make things easier for students. The writing tasks prescribed are very much acceptable in the Aligarh Muslim University context and are culturally suitable to both teachers and students.

Are the bibliographic features relevant in terms of quality and availability of the package (teacher's book, software, tapes); author's qualifications, degree of value for money and cost effectiveness?

The teachers are provided with a set of four books i.e. two set of books for class XI and the other set for class XII. It comprises a core course book and a supplementary reader. No other audio-visual aids or other supplementary materials are provided. These textbooks are printed under the aegis of NCERT which has prepared these books further under the guidance of a committee comprising well known academicians, researchers, ELT experts and other experienced persons in the field of education. The textbooks are very much cost effective in the context of Aligarh Muslim University and provide a degree of value for the price which one pays for it.

Is the design of the textbook attractive in layout, degree of visual appeal, readability of fonts, tables etc., ease of navigation through the book, clarity of instructions and durability?

The textbook has maintained a clear and concise view of each writing skill within each chapter. The writing skills are arranged in a simpler to complex model. The instructions are properly depicted and different fonts are used to highlight headings and sub-headings. The use of diagrams and formats helps students to understand them in a better way. However, there is no use of colours and any attractive layout. The entire course book is in black and white print but the textbook has tried to make the cover page and title attractive through the use of art work. Class XI textbooks have provided students with suitable examples of each sub-skill

before asking them to carry out tasks while class XII books have related writing skills to other skills of language and have provided assistance at the end. The textbook also allows for easy navigation as the skills are arranged from a simpler to complex level. These do not create confusion for students and teachers. The instructions are clear but some more assistance can make things easier to understand. The textbook is also durable as it is a hard bound and light weight thereby easy to carry.

How is the organization of the textbook carried in extent to which sequencing and progression of exercises is suitable and coherent, how far sequencing and progression of units is suitable, appropriacy of proficiency level, smoothness of skill integration, extent of scaffolding at early stages, and recursion of skills and content?

The organization of textbook in extent to sequencing and progression of exercises is suitable and coherent. The exercises recommended for class XI starts with a detailed study of the sub-skill through reading and understanding the skill followed by activities to do. The skills presented in class XI starts with note making, followed by summarizing, sub-titling, essay writing, letter writing and finally creative writing. The writing skills presented in class XII textbook focus on what all students have learnt in class XI and move on to what is denoted as Advanced writing skills. The exercises are: understanding the text, talking about the text, working with words, noticing form, writing and things to do. Writing skills are associated with other skills of language which in together are related to a text. The text can be interchanged according to the choice of teachers and students as all of them have the same pattern of exercises to be carried

out. We also see that writing skills are not individually focused but related to the text and further to other skills of language. Guidance is provided at the end for students to understand what each writing task intends. These Units are arranged in a simple to complex manner when it comes to class XI but when we examine class XII textbooks texts can be interchanged.

Students studying at senior secondary classes are selected on the basis of an entrance examination and majority of them have an exposure to English for more than eight years. The tasks assigned in the textbooks are appropriate to the proficiency level of the students. The skills are related to each other as in class XI writing skills are related to reading skills and in class XII writing skills are related to a text followed by an integration of other skills. The textbook has provided scaffolding for students at the early stage as sub-skills are presented with detailed information and guidance at the beginning. The skills are revised as one reaches class XII because the exercises are based on what students have learnt in the previous class. However the content has changed.

How is the content relevant in terms of degree of authenticity, relevance, and appropriacy of the text genres, extent to which purposes, audiences, and contexts are addressed, interest level of readings and topics, sufficiency, accuracy, and reliability of language explanations?

The contents made available to students are authentic as the subject /topic chosen are extracted from an article of a newspaper, an autobiography, a letter, an interview, a short story etc. The content seems to be appropriate

as almost majority of students before joining class XI have studied English for more than eight years but there are also students from rural background who have to put an extra effort to understand topics like creative writing, sub-titling, and some text-based tasks etc. The content seems to be relevant also as some of the genres such as letter writing, application for a job, writing C.V/ Biodata, note making etc. are very much useful for their future. There is no detailed information addressed in terms of purposes and audience but the context is explained to students. It is seen that students find some contents like creative writing, C.V writing, writing business letters and some chapters in class XII which asks students to carry on writing activities associated with the texts which are chapter 6 “Poets and Pancakes”, chapter 8 “Going Places” more interesting and appealing than others. But there are contents like summarizing, sub-titling which student do not show much interest. The language explanations provided to students are not sufficient, accurate and reliable as there should be more information provided to students regarding the sub-skills and what the textbook intends through these sub-skills.

Does the methodology undertaken by textbooks relevant in extent to which tasks, exercises, and methods appropriate to learner’s proficiencies and goals, correspondence to teachers’ preferred methods, how far independent writing is developed and degree of likely learner involvement.

The methodology adopted by the textbooks regarding tasks, exercises, and methods are limited to a fewer tasks and exercises but the way in

which they are presented is appropriate to the proficiency level of students and relevant to their goals. Majority of teachers prefer to match with the methods suggested by the textbooks so that no confusion is created, but wherever necessary they look into other sources to make things easier for students. The skills taken by the textbooks are both general and advanced and are specially designed for the senior secondary learners and a vast difference in the written samples can be seen between students studying at class XI and when they reach class XII. The methodology adopted by the textbook prepares them for an independent writing only if they practise it on a regular basis. The methodology adopted by the textbook to involve learners is however not so strong and it is the teachers' strictness and the fear of examination and sessionals which make them involve a little bit. However, there are some topics and tasks which students find interesting.

How is the usability factor of the book in terms of flexibility of choosing the writing skills, degree of student-friendliness and of teacher- friendliness, completeness as a course, feasibility of completing the textbook in available time and the degree of usefulness of supporting materials and aids?

The textbooks have provided flexibility to the teachers to choose the kind of skill they wish to undertake in any part of the session. The teachers and students find that the textbooks are quite friendly but for some tasks such as letters, factual writing, notices, report writing etc. they draw upon other sources too. We may assume these books to be complete as a course, except that some more examples should be included for writing

skills such as letters, reports, factual writing etc. The writing skills provided in the textbooks are not much time-consuming but as teachers have to look into other skills of language too, at times she/he may have to take some extra classes in order to complete the syllabus in time. These textbooks are only provided with supplementary readers as supporting materials and these help students increase their knowledge of English vocabulary, forms and other genres of writing through reading skills.

How can we judge the overall quality and suitability of the textbook?

The textbooks seem to cover most of the items discussed in the syllabus, except minutes, memoranda, e-mail messages etc. The items covered are suitable for students to tackle real life situations where they have to write an application, a letter or to make notes etc. when they pass their senior secondary classes. The teaching fraternity of Aligarh Muslim University is well qualified and experienced. Majority of the teachers are aware of their context and well versed with the instructions provided in the textbooks. They know how to adapt themselves to the situation and to carry out writing activities and tasks prescribed in their textbooks. The learners and teachers are not much satisfied with the activities prescribed in the textbooks but wish that more interesting topics should be included and space should be provided in textbooks where they can carry out the writing tasks.

Recommendations:

In my opinion, the textbooks recommended for class XI and XII should go in for some coloured layouts, space where students can carry out their writing activities as it will save time and students would seriously involve themselves, some activities which would allow students to make use of audio-visual aids, space for writing activities to be carried out in textbooks itself. There should be a detailed description of the instructions and purposes needed in a skill. Some more new writing genres should be included such as email writing, taking/making notes from recorded talks and some more variety of letters etc. Class XII textbooks should include some more exercises and activities under writing skill as they are few and restricted to the text only while class XI textbooks should include some more new writing genres.

Conclusion:

Textbooks play a great role in any classroom activity as it is the use of textbooks only that uniformity is created among students. As Sheldon (1988) has pointed that “published materials have more credibility than the teacher-generated one.”⁵ (St. John, 2001), “Research shows that a majority of teachers use textbooks as their principal curriculum guide and source of lessons.”⁶ The textbooks used in class XI and XII are published by the NCERT which has taken recommendations from educational experts, members of National Monitoring Committee, Ministry of Human Resource Development etc. The textbooks are suitable in price and quality and the textbooks have given weightage to the skills of writing. However, no textbook can be regarded as flawless; it is here that the

teacher has to adapt according to the context and make tasks and activities recommended in textbooks easier for students. The teacher is the best person to realize the needs and aims of the students studying in his/her class, so they have to develop strategies and adapt different tasks and activities in order to make things easier. As majority of students try to keep away when it comes to writing skills so here these strategies only would help students to improve and practise tasks recommended in course books.

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CHAPTER THREE

A Critical Examination of the Teaching of Writing Skills

CHAPTER 3

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE TEACHING OF WRITING SKILLS

INTRODUCTION:

English language plays an important role from educational point of view. Though a foreign language, it has occupied a central role in the Indian curriculum and has been a medium of instruction of learning and teaching both at school and at college level since Independence in 1947. One of the most important roles of English today as a subject to thrive is its use as a library language which was designated by the Indian Education Commission (1964-66). The Commission has allowed the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction up to university level but no student would be further promoted until he/she has acquired some proficiency in English. The main reasons can be that almost majority of world's technical journals, periodicals, newspapers, etc are published in English. The importance of using English as a library language is brought home thus by the Radhakrishnan Commission:

English however must continue to be studied. It is a language which is rich in literature-humanistic, scientific and technical. If under sentimental urges we should give up English, we would cut ourselves from the living stream of ever growing knowledge. Unable to have access to this knowledge, our standards of scholarship would fast deteriorate and

our participation in the world movements of thought would become negligible. Its effects would be disastrous for our political life, for living nations must move with the times and must respond quickly to the challenges of their surroundings. English is the only means of preventing our isolation from the world and we will act unwisely if we allow ourselves to be enveloped in the folds of a dark curtain of ignorance. Our students who are undergoing training at schools which will admit them either to the university or vocation must acquire sufficient mastery of English to give them access to the treasures of knowledge, and in the universities no student should be allowed to take a degree who does not acquire the ability to read with facility and understanding works of English authors.¹

With such emphasis and importance to learn English as a subject in Indian schools and colleges English acquired a position which has dominated the school curriculum. The tasks mainly comprised mastering English written by great English writers of their times. However, research insights in pedagogy concluded that this type of education was leading their students unable to use the English language in real life situations. Soon the higher officials and curriculum planners too, realized the need of times and began to focus on the use of English for practical purposes thereby introducing and focusing on English language as a subject in Indian curriculum at schools and colleges. With the introduction of

English language in schools course books included separate tasks designated to each skill of language.

Writing as sub-skill of English language is the most difficult and laborious of all the skills. It is easy to speak in a foreign language without understanding its scriptural art but writing needs a considerable research from mechanics to content and style of the language before presenting it on screen. It is seen that majority of students are least proficient when it comes to writing skills. Even the teachers believe that writing is a far too difficult skill to be taught and yet, they do teach it. In a typical writing classroom each student represents a different culture and a context, some are skilled while others are there who are not so competent as their other classmates, some feel comfortable to the new syllabus while some would be there who would be confronting problems in understanding the new genres of English writing. The teacher has to make adjustments and implement various language teaching methods to derive maximum output from them. Every writing class cannot be a success to every student but there is always a scope for development and improvement through continuous practice and motivation even for the skilled writer.

IMPORTANCE OF WRITING SKILLS:

Like other skills of English, writing skill plays an important part in the academic development of students because it provides students with comprehensibility, fluency, ability and confidence which they require in their future course or for higher studies. It creates a sense of seriousness in classrooms thereby requiring both teachers and students to be serious when it comes to writing.

Writing reflects the basic information learnt in due course and neither the teachers nor the students ever want that they should be criticized for their teaching and learning. It helps teachers to judge the competence level of their students in all the subjects. Speech is ephemeral and no one can fully prescribe their point of view regarding the learner's ability or competence only by listening to them. One needs evidence in the form of something which they can visibly see, read, re-read and move their pens across the page before allotting final judgment on their learning and this can only be made possible through writing. Perhaps that is why writing is regarded as the most reliable sources of individual judgment.

Writing as a skill works on multidisciplinary functions of language thereby providing an opportunity to work on various areas of a language such as vocabulary, syntax, grammar, mechanics and organization. These functions help students learn the language in a complete manner and the ability to write in a correct or appropriate way makes them realize the power of written language that how much it can influence the thought and beliefs of the reader.

Writing is also an excellent source to sharpen one's memory as regular practice of this skill clarifies many difficult ideas and thoughts. Many novel ideas and new thoughts are explored and discovered as one starts penning down, making writing a conscious, deliberate and a planned activity. These features help the students take up their academic work in a more serious and in a meaningful manner thereby training their minds, as they would be soon leaving the school setting and joining college or a job.

Objectives and Tasks laid by the syllabus in taking up writing skills:

Teaching of writing skills requires a careful planning and implementation of strategies specified in course content so that the objectives are achieved and students are able to display them in future. Every syllabus is designed with the aim to achieving certain objectives; these objectives may be short term objectives as well as long term objectives. The course syllabus recommended by Aligarh Muslim University for class XI and XII is taken from C.B.S.E. (Central Board of Secondary Education) which is one of the national boards. The basic objectives laid by the Board for writing skill are as:

- To develop greater confidence and proficiency in the use of writing skill which is necessary for social and academic purpose.
- To build communicative competence in various registers of English.
- To translate texts from mother tongue(s) into English and vice-versa.
- To develop ability and knowledge required in order to engage in independent reflection and enquiry.
- To develop the capacity to appreciate literary use of English and also use English creatively and imaginatively.

At the end of the course the syllabus intends that the learners are able to develop the competence in order to

- Carry on text-based writing i.e. writing in response to questions or tasks based on prescribed or unseen text.

- Write expository/argumentative essays (250-500 words) explaining or developing a topic, arguing a case.
- Write formal/informal letters and applications for different purposes.
- Write items related to work place (minutes/memoranda, notices, summaries, reports; filling up of forms, preparing CVs, e-mails, messages etc.).
- Taking or making notes from reference materials, recorded talks e.c.²

The curriculum has laid down these objectives considering the future as well as the present requirements of the learners through the syllabus. The syllabus tries to attain these objectives through a set of writing tasks prepared keeping the above aims and objectives of the syllabus both for class XI and class XII. The writing tasks recommended for class XI comprises a section devoted to writing tasks only in the English core syllabus. The section covers twenty marks weightage in the compulsory examination and the time assigned to cover this portion is around forty periods.

The writing section for class XI is divided into three divisions comprising a set of writing tasks in each division and the syllabus has assigned marks for each set of division. The first division comprises two tasks of which the student has to attempt any one of the tasks. The task asks students to factually describe any event or an accident, a report or a process based on verbal input provided in (80-100 words). This division carries the weightage of four marks in the writing section.

The second division comprises another set of writing tasks in which students have to attempt any one of the tasks. The task asks students to write any one composition based on a visual/verbal input in around (100-150 words). This written composition may be descriptive or argumentative in nature and may include an article to be published in a newspaper or for a school magazine or a speech. This portion carries the weightage of eight marks in the writing section.

The third division in the section is completely devoted to letter writing tasks. The task includes different types of formal letters which are divided into three different sets and are as follows:

- a) Business or official letters (for making enquiries, registering complaints, asking for or giving information, placing orders and sending replies).
- b) Letters to the editor (giving suggestions and opinions on an issue of public interest).
- c) Application for a job.

The writing section prescribed for class XII covers section (b) in the recommended syllabus and is titled as *Advanced writing skills*. This section covers thirty five marks of weightage in the main compulsory English examination and seventy periods are assigned. The tasks are more advanced and more complex than what the students attempted in class XI and an extension of what they learnt earlier.

The first task asks students to take up any one short composition from a given set of two choices of not more than fifty words. The choices are advertisement and notices, designing or drafting posters, writing formal

and informal invitations and replies. This task carries the weightage of five marks in the Compulsory English examination.

The second task asks students to attempt any one of the tasks in about eighty to hundred words. It comprises report writing or a factual description based on some given verbal input. This task has been allotted the weightage of five marks in the writing section of the compulsory English examination.

The third task in the writing section is devoted to different forms of formal letter writing and again a set of two letters are presented through a given verbal input and they have to select any one. The letters are of these types:

- a) Business or official letters (for making enquiries, registering complaints, asking for and giving information, placing orders or sending reply).
- b) Letters to the editor (giving suggestions on an issue).
- c) Application for a job.

This task carries the weightage of seven and a half marks in the Writing section of the main English compulsory examination.

The fourth task assigned under *Advanced writing skills* asks students to write any one composition out of the given set of two choices. This composition should be written on the basis of some visual/verbal input in about eighty to hundred words. The composition may be an article or a speech which may be descriptive or argumentative in nature. This task covers the weightage of seven and a half marks in the writing section.

Learners' Needs:

The term need “refers to wants, desires, demands, expectation, motivation, lacks, constraints, and requirements (Brindley, 1984).³”

Majority of the students entering senior secondary classes of Aligarh Muslim University are admitted through an entrance examination conducted according to the norms and conditions of the University Grants Commission. Students with a higher grade in the entrance exam qualify for the respective faculties for which they wish.

These students admitted to senior secondary schools including both boys and girls usually represent a heterogeneity in classrooms as most of them are from different parts of the country as well from foreign countries too. These students represent and bring in different contexts, aptitude, motivational, socio-economic factors along with difference in age, nationality, gender, competence in the perception of skills, abilities and disabilities, educational experience etc. Some of the students are exposed to English as one of the subjects for more than 12-14 years while some had exposure to English for not more than two years. The majority of these learners agree that English language as a subject and writing skills specifically are very much important to their future needs and aims and it is the understanding of this skill only which is going to be like a survival kit for majority of them both in and out of the country.

The primary aim of the course is to achieve the objectives which include both general and specific ones by the students in their present course module and it is therefore the responsibility of the designers to represent and cater to the needs of each student i.e. skilled as well as for those who are not so skilled. As for some taking up English writing classes would

mean to improve their ability in academic work or to qualify various entrance exams such as Medicine/ Engineering or they may need it as an employability skill or as a requirement for higher education.

Every course aims to increase the competence level of those who take up the course and increase their input knowledge from the existing level to a stage at a higher level. English writing skills recommended for class XI and XII are designed with an aim to achieve this purpose. The sub-skills of writing introduced are selected from various genres and become complex as the student reaches the next stage. The genres include writing C.V /Bio-data, factual writing, letter writing, notices, applications, note making, report writing, paragraph writing etc. These genres of writing are a set of basic writing skills which are prepared, keeping in mind the future needs, which the senior secondary learners are going to face. Through these different writing genres learners come to know the difference between the various requirements of different genres and its purposes of writing i.e. how is an application different from a notice or how are business letters addressed or what content makes a persuasive writing different from a narrative or descriptive writing.

However, students entering into class XI bring a variety of experiences and contexts. For some to understand the new context is quite easy while for others the new syllabus means a new context to understand and cope with. Typically many of them are anxious and usually lack the essential skills required to learn the writing skill in a better way. So it is on the part of the teacher to create opportunities for students to get exposed to the aims and objectives, essential skill required, strength and weaknesses regarding their writing skills so that they are able to understand and participate confidently when it comes to writing skills.

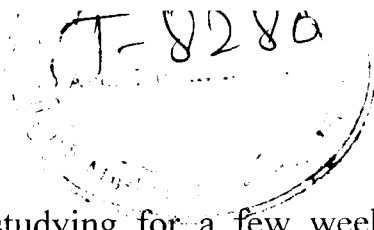
Learning Context:

Context plays a greater role in the effective learning and teaching that takes place in classrooms. It also governs the choice of resource and classroom procedures. The social attitude towards English language contributes to the attitude of teachers and students towards taking up and deciphering it in classrooms.

The context of Aligarh Muslim University, however has given a special place for the learning and teaching of English language from the beginning itself. The founder of Aligarh Muslim University, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan laid greater emphasis on the inclusion of English language along with the other vernacular languages and owing to his desire to impart Western education through English. English became a subject of interest and later became the medium of instruction in both schools and colleges of Aligarh Muslim University.

Teachers appointed to teach English in Senior Secondary Schools of Aligarh Muslim University are much experienced and skilled to teach English as a subject. They are aware of the current language teaching methods to take up different skills of language specially the writing skills. Teachers know the importance of pre-writing and post-writing techniques and the ways to make the students understand and work out various prescribed writing activities in class.

However, the educational system of Aligarh Muslim University is much more examination-oriented system thereby influencing both the learning and teaching taking place in classrooms. This influence is clearly seen in the teaching of all the subjects but English is the subject which is particularly much more affected by this influence because in other



subjects students gain much by studying for a few weeks before the annual examination but English as a language cannot be learnt thus. It has to be practised constantly, clarifying doubts and exploring and discovering newer things in each session and thereby understanding English as a language in a better way.

Teachers feel that the influence of examination and sessionals make them unable to impart completely the writing skills to the students. Even the limitation of time to complete the syllabus makes them unable to carry out the writing tasks in a complete and in a proper manner i.e. using proper language teaching techniques. Some of the teachers felt that students give much of the time to their main subjects and start neglecting English language.

Aligarh Muslim University has been affiliated to C.B.S.E (Central Board of Secondary Education) which is one of the national level boards in India. Along with it Aligarh Muslim University has prescribed the inclusion of sessionals marks in the main examination marks. The inclusion of the sessionals also acts as a barrier in the proper rendering of writing skills as teachers have to allot valuable time in conducting two sessionals in a session. As the teachers are experienced in teaching these skills for years, they are well versed with the pattern and majority therefore focuses on those writing tasks which are important for examination. Students too, are not lacking in making a good effort to go through previous set of question papers and guessing the important writing skills and going through readymade guides to memorize the features associated with the particular genre of writing before their annual examination. Even the syllabus gives the students a chance to prepare beforehand a particular choice and leave the other ones or not to give so

much importance. The results however reveals that majority of the students pass their compulsory English examination with good grades.

Classroom Observation:

Traditionally, classroom was meant to be a place where there would be transmission of ideas and theories from teachers to the students. The teacher knew everything about the subject or topic and students were the passive recipients. The teacher had access to all knowledge which would lead to effective learning and students' knowledge was judged on the basis of those notes which their teacher had lectured in classrooms. The writing which was carried out by the students in these classrooms depicted a translation exercise or modeling the features of texts in order to acquire the correct target language forms. With the advent of newer approaches to the teaching of writing the attitude of teachers and students has changed. Now, the role of the teachers is not that of a strict disciplinarian but of a motivator and a facilitator of classroom activities. Teachers are now not viewing the texts produced by the students but observing the processes of how those students reach their target i.e. the difficulties and hurdles they face in completing a writing tasks and then the teacher's role is to identify the errors committed by the students and develop ways and means so that students realize those errors and remedy these.

In the context of Aligarh Muslim University teachers are usually seen as a driving force in the class. She/he knows very well about the importance of writing skills for the students and is prepared well before taking them up. Majority of the teachers said that they usually follow the guidelines prescribed by the textbooks, explore various resources and sometimes

their own experience to teach these skills effectively in classrooms. However, it is seen that teachers come to the classroom then describe about the topic/genre, sometimes have a discussion, then to the blackboard and tell them the criteria needed in the particular writing skill and finally, provide them with a suitable exercise to be carried out and then ask some of them to read out their samples followed by his/her comments. At other times the teacher carries out the samples for self correction later returning the samples with his/her written comments.

The learners are seen to be serious especially when their teachers are themselves involved with the skill otherwise many of them were with a neglectful attitude and somewhat uninterested and pre-occupied with other subjects. Those who were serious maintained a class record of the writing skills carried out in classrooms but their number was quite low.

Communication plays a greater role when it comes to deciphering and understanding the technicalities of writing skills. The interaction between teachers and students or between students themselves leads to shedding of many fears and inhibitions and a channel is developed between teachers and students and among students. It helps students take up feedback in a positive manner and thus motivate them to work and analyze their errors. Similarly when students find themselves facing the same kind of problems as their peers they are motivated to work on them.

In a large class where a single teacher cannot interact with everyone, group work plays a greater role as it leads students to come together and work on different issues not individually but as a group and during this kind of interaction many issues/confusion are solved by students themselves. However, in the context of Aligarh Muslim University

teachers have felt that group work is not so effective as when they interact individually with class because most of them feel that the class gets out of their control and students create noise and instead of working seriously on a writing skill they start their own conversation. Moreover, a single class which is of 40-45 minutes and the compulsion of the University to complete the syllabus does not allow the teachers to go in for group work. So, most of them prefer to stick to the traditional mode of teaching, where they come to class and act as a single authoritative power.

Teacher's Role towards writing skills:

Teachers play a pivotal role when it comes to disseminating writing skills in class because it is his/her attitude that would influence students and is later reflected in their writing skills too. Earlier the teacher's role in writing skill arose after the students had submitted their samples i.e. for his/her evaluation but with process approach this outlook has totally changed from the traditional school of thought regarding writing skills.

Hughey et al (1983:48) presents a comprehensive list of roles for teachers in a writing program:

- They keep the writing task clear, simple, and straightforward.
- They teach the writing process.
- They analyze and diagnose a writing product.
- They establish short term and long term goals for each student.
- They balance classroom activities, providing some for individuals and some for groups.
- They develop meaningful assignments.

- They provide real audience: an audience other than the teacher.
- They make student papers available to students: they allow students to see their own body of work develop.
- They move from the known to the unknown and utilize the student's previous knowledge.
- They provide writing activities which reinforce reading, listening and speaking skills.
- They provide heuristics for invention, purpose and audience.
- They outline clearly the goals for each writing assignment.
- They teach the conventions of spelling, punctuation and capitalization.
- They teach the principles- rules, conventions, and guidelines of writing- as a means to develop thoughts, order ideas, and communicate these ideas in a significant way.⁴

The role of teachers began to be viewed in a different manner as now they are not the authoritative power in classrooms whose job is to assign grades on students writing but are facilitators and responders of students' writing through positive feedbacks. It is the support of the teacher which plays a greater role in nurturing and enhancing the student's level of competence. Every learner in a class displays varied behavior towards different tasks assigned by the teachers and if a teacher provides such environment where they involve themselves in collaboration with the students not only to provide solutions to questions but also explore those questions with the students creates a positive environment.

The teaching faculty appointed to teach at senior secondary level of Aligarh Muslim University is selected on the basis of their qualification and experience. Majority of the teachers are appointed as permanent, having more than 5-6 years of experience in teaching at senior secondary level. They are well aware of the current trends of language teaching but majority while taking up writing skills usually stick to the traditional mode of teaching i.e. they come to the class tell the required criteria associated with a particular writing skill, then provide an example to students and finally asking them to carry out another task based on the same writing skill. Later, some of the students are asked to read out their samples and the teacher comments on those samples while at other times she/he takes the samples for correction.

It is seen that majority of the teachers' aim is that their students understand the basic criteria of writing tasks prescribed in their syllabus so that they are able to reproduce it effectively in their examination and sessionals. However discussions and pre-writing activities are not so frequently carried out as it requires quality time and the time allotted to a class is quite fixed in which the teacher has to cater to attendance, syllabus and other factors.

Teachers feel that writing is a more serious and conscious skill which requires a serious attitude from students and if the teacher is not serious and strict in a writing class students tend to create noise which leads to further confusion. Majority of the teachers, however feel that they do the best when it comes to writing skills as their class is heterogeneous and they have to cater to the needs of skilled as well as not so-skilled students and it is only their serious role which leads to more effective learning and teaching of the writing skills in classroom.

Attitude of Learners towards the Writing Skill:

“A group of learners in a classroom with a teacher comprises a learning community.⁵”

Traditionally learners were seen in writing classrooms jotting down scripts from the blackboards and later memorizing them. The learners were seen as passive recipients of their teacher's knowledge whose job was to provide students with the most correct model for manipulation. However with new approaches today learners are allowed to work independently to construct and represent their own meaning through writing and teachers are seen as guides who would be helping students at each stage of writing.

Learners admitted to senior secondary classes come up with different levels of learning. They have their own unique style and follow different strategies of comprehending the tasks assigned by the course syllabus. The attitude of the students seen towards writing skills at senior secondary schools of Aligarh Muslim University is not with so much ease or excitement, though they very well know about the importance of these writing skills in their future career and academic life.

Most of the students are seen attending seriously to these writing skills at the end of session i.e. when their examination is near. In order to complete the English syllabus they go in for readymade guides available in the market while some refer to old grammar books and notes.

During the session students are seen not so much enthusiastic and often lack motivation and desire to participate in writing activities carried in classrooms. The reasons are however many: some of the students feels that the writing activities prescribed in their syllabus do not excite them

so much and the way their teachers take up those skills too lack the motivation and desire while another group of students feel that the burden of other subjects make them less motivated to take up their English writing classes in a serious manner. Some of the students felt that there are too many students in class and so they feel neglected sometimes.

Motivation

The above listed factors can only work when the students know the purpose of, why they are learning writing skills? A motivated learner can be defined as “one who is willing or even eager to invest effort in learning activities and to progress.”⁶ A motivated learner is the one who benefits more in any language course as motivation is somewhere related to achievement in language learning. It is found that majority of the students were motivated to learn writing skills as they know the importance in regard to their future needs and almost it is the duty of every teacher to motivate students so that they themselves involve with the tasks carried out in classrooms.

Conclusion:

This chapter is an attempt to describe the overall factors which influence the teaching and learning of writing skills in senior secondary classrooms of Aligarh Muslim University. The difficulties and hurdles confronted by teachers in taking up this skill in view of the different factors which govern the teaching and learning situation of an institution.

No teaching can be successful until there is a balance in the factors such as context, the learner's attitude, syllabus, time factor, teacher's perception, educational system etc. If it is found that at any stage a particular factor does not fit in with the other factors, it affects the learning and teaching situation.

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CHAPTER FOUR

An Assessment of Students' Writing Skills

CHAPTER- FOUR

AN ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS

(I) ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE:

This questionnaire was prepared in order to secure details from the faculty about the delivery system of writing skills carried by them at senior secondary schools of Aligarh Muslim University. A set of ten questionnaires were distributed at senior secondary boys and girls and the return rate was eight in total.

The questionnaire started with personal details followed by three sections, the first section was designed with a view to extracting teacher's observations about students' competence when they enter class XI, the second section comprised all areas which influence the learning and imparting of writing skills and the third section comprised some statements related to writing skills. Teachers were given the freedom to choose more than one option.

Analysis:

The questionnaire started with a detailed list to inquire about their personal information which started with their name, gender, school, qualifications and teaching experience.

Question 1st: (a) 'Name' (optional).....

(b) Gender: - [5 Females and 3 Males]

Question 2nd: was where they were teaching, 'School':

Five were teaching in senior secondary boys and three were teaching in senior secondary girls.

Question 3rd: was about their qualifications:

Teacher	Qualifications
1	M.A and PhD
2	M.A and PhD
3	M.A
4	M.A and M.Phil
5	M.A, PGCTE and PGDTE
6	M.A and BEd
7	M.A and PGCTE
8	M.A

Majority of the teachers are post -graduates while two teachers have done their doctorate, one had done M. Phil the other two had done certificate courses and one among them has done Diploma in teaching of English from C.E.F.L (Hyderabad). One of the female teachers has done her BEd while two teachers had done their post-graduation only.

Question 4th was about their teaching experience:

YEARS	NO OF TEACHERS
1- 2	1
3- 5	3
6- 7	1
8-11	2
12-15	1

It is seen that the majority of the teachers who are teaching at senior secondary level of Aligarh Muslim University are experienced. There is only one teacher who is having less than two years of experience while the rest are having more than three to five years of teaching experience.

Section (I):

Question 5th was created with a view to analyzing student's entry behavior and level in writing, when they enter class XI. The question started with-

When your students enter class XI-

- (a) Are they well versed in grammatical rules, vocabulary and sentence construction?

YES [12.5%]

NO [87.5%]

Results here revealed that majority of the teachers believe that most of the students lack proper knowledge.

(b) Know them, but are not able to employ it in their written work.

YES [75%]

NO [25%]

Results again reveal that majority of the teachers find that their students are not able to employ it in their written work.

(c) Their written work lacks cohesion.

YES [87.5%]

NO [12.5%]

Majority of the teachers agree that students are not able to make a link between sentences and within a sentence by the use of devices which make up a unified whole text.

(d) Are able to come up with a coherent piece of composition.

YES [37.5%]

NO [62.5%]

Section (II):

Question 6th: Which language do you prefer for giving instructions in class?

87.5% of teachers used only English as a medium to give instructions in class while 12.5% of teachers preferred to use both English and Urdu as the medium of instruction.

Question 7th: How far is your class able to grasp lectures delivered in English?

Scale	Response
To a large extent	62.5%
To some extent	37.5%
With difficulty	-
Not at all	-

Question 8th: In which skill are they not confident? Kindly specify your assessment for each skill. The following list of scales was provided:

1= Least confident 2= Less confident 3= Confident 4=Very confident

1. LISTENING:

Scale	Response
1	0%
2	12.5%
3	75%
4	12.5%

2. SPEAKING:

Scale	Response
1	0%
2	50%
3	37.5%
4	12.5%

3. READING:

Scale	response
1	0%
2	12.5%
3	87.5%
4	0%

4. WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	0%
2	50%
3	37.5%
4	12.5%

Majority of teachers feel that their students are confident in listening and reading skills but less confident when it comes to speaking and writing skills.

Question 9th: Which skill according to you is most important for them? Rate your order of importance for each skill. The following list of scales was provided:

1 = Most important 2 = Important 3 = Less important 4 = Not so important

1. LISTENING:

Scale	response
1	37.5%
2	37.5%
3	25%
4	0%

2. SPEAKING:

Scale	Response
1	37.5%
2	37.5%
3	25%
4	0%

3. READING:

Scale	Response
1	62.5%
2	25%
3	12.5%
4	0%

4. WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	37.5%
2	37.5%
3	25%
4	0%

Majority agreed that all the skills are most important for them.

Question 10th: In which skill do they have a slower improvement as a part of the curriculum? Kindly rate your assessment for each skill. The following list of scales was provided:

1=No improvement 2=Less improvement 3=Some improvement 4= Much improvement

1. LISTENING:

Scale	Response
1	0%
2	50%
3	37.5%
4	12.5%

2. SPEAKING:

Scale	Response
1	12.5%
2	37.5%
3	25%
4	25%

3. READING:

Scale	Response
1	12.5%
2	25%
3	62.5%
4	0%

4. WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	0%
2	12.5%
3	62.5%
4	25%

Majority of the teachers feel that it is the listening and speaking skills which show less improvement as a part of the curriculum but reading and writing skills have shown some improvement.

The next set of questions was designed in order to elicit teachers' observation and evaluation of students' writing skills.

Question 11th: How do you evaluate your students' writing skill as compared to other skills?

Scale	Response
Good	37.5%
Satisfactory	62.5%
Unsatisfactory	-
Poor	-

Results revealed that majority of the teachers found their students writing skills to be satisfactory.

Question 12th: Do you find difference in the written work of students coming from Hindi/Urdu medium and of English medium? If yes what difference do you notice?

Scale	Response
Yes	100%
No	-
Partly Yes	-
Cannot Say Anything	-

According to teachers, students coming from mother tongue mediums lack

- Coherence in there written work.
- Not comfortable with English language and there is a communication gap in their written samples.
- Lack grammatical competence therefore not able to construct well organized text.
- Inability to express their views in the written medium.

Question no 13th: While writing, you notice your students confronting problems at various levels of writing. Rate your assessment for each level. The following list of scales was provided:

1=Most difficult 2=Difficult 3=Less difficult 4=Not so difficult

Levels	1	2	3	4
Vocabulary	12.5%	50%	12.5%	25%
Grammar	12.5%	37.5%	25%	25%
Sentential Level	-	75%	12.5%	12.5%
Drafting a coherent composition	37.5%	37.5%	12.5%	12.5%

Teachers find that almost all these levels are difficult for the majority of students.

Question 14th: Do you make it compulsory for students to carry out each of the writing activity prescribed in the course textbooks?

Scale	Response
Always	25%
Sometimes	62.5%
Occasionally	12.5%
Never	-

Question 15th: Are the writing tasks prescribed in the course books *Hornbill* and *Flamingo* relevant to the future needs of students?

Scale	Response
Yes	-
No	12.5%
Partly Yes	87.5%
Cannot Say Anything	-

It clearly reveals that writing tasks prescribed in textbooks are not updated to cater for students' future needs.

Question 16th: Do you feel that writing activities prescribed in textbooks are relevant to Aligarh Muslim University context? Which other activities could be introduced?

Scale	response
Yes	25%
No	25%
Partly Yes	50%
Cannot say anything	-

Some of the teachers recommended that there should be inclusion of more interactive activities such as (dialogue writing, debate, group discussion, cloze paragraphs and guided writing).

Question 17th: Before asking students to write on a topic, do you conduct some pre-writing activities?

Scale	Response
Always	37.5%
Sometimes	62.5%
Occasionally	-
Never	-

Question 18th: Do you consult prescribed textbooks only to impart writing skills? Which other books/materials do you consider to impart better writing skills?

Scale	Response
Always	-
Sometimes	50%
Occasionally	50%
Never	-

Teachers have mentioned that they look for internet sites and books published by Cambridge and Oxford as other materials.

Question 19th: Which approach do you adopt in class to teach writing skills?

Approaches	Response
Controlled	0%
Free	25%
Communicative	25%
Integrated	50%

Question 20th: How do you impart a particular writing skill in class?

Options	Response
By your Experience	37.5%
By following the Guidelines	50%
By discussing it with Colleagues	25%
By exploiting Resources (library, internet etc)	37.5%

Question 21st Out of the given writing sub-skills which of them do you consider as the most important for your students future? Rate your assessment for each sub-skill by indicating 1 as the lowest and 4 as the highest. A list of sub-skills was provided:

(a) Essays, summary and note making.

Scales	Response
1	25%
2	12.5%
3	0%
4	62.5%

(b) C.V, applications and notices

Scales	Response
1	12.5%
2	37.5%
3	50%
4	12.5%

(c) Letters (formal/ business)

Scales	Response
1	0%
2	50%
3	37.5%
4	12.5%

(c) Sessionals and Examinations

Scales	Response
1	75%
2	0%
3	0%
4	25%

Options	Response
Sessionals and Examinations	1
Letters (formal/ business)	2
C.V, applications and notices	3
Essays, summary and note making.	4

Majority (62.5%) has placed essays, summary & note making to be the most important, followed by (50%) C.V., applications and notices then (50%) letters, lowest preference (75%) have been given to sessionals and examination answers.

Question 22nd: How often do you provide students with feedback?

Scales	Response
Always	100%
Sometimes	-
Occasionally	-
Never	-

Question 23rd: What kind of feedback do you provide on the written work of students?

Options	Response
Remarks	37.5%
Rubrics	12.5%
Marking	12.5%
All of the above	62.5%

Question 24th: How often do you conduct follow up activities related to writing skills you have taught in class?

Options	Response
Once in a week	12.5%
Once in a fortnight	37.5%
Once in a month	50%
Once in a session	-

Question 25th: Was an open-ended question which asked teachers about the problems they are facing, and solutions which they think to avoid those problems, i.e. As teachers you must be facing problems in teaching writing skills. Please list some of these and provide some suggestions as to how this skill can be taught and perceived in a better way.

Problems faced by teachers:

1. Some of the lessons seemed to be boring and monotonous where student lack interest to continue with the activities.
2. Textbooks lack authenticity as there are incorrect spellings and grammar.
3. A wide gap is seen between students coming from Hindi and English medium.
4. Textbooks lack in vocabulary, coherence, innovativeness, creativity and motivating students to write correct sentences.

5. Many of the students lack interest in writing thereby variation are seen in the response.
6. A large class defeats the purpose of teaching.

Suggestions provided by teachers:

1. Textbooks should include topics that should catch the interest of students.
2. Challenging tasks in writing course to be included.
3. Exercises which would help them to be more competent.
4. Inclusion of exercises for teaching students the devices of coherence, cohesion and discourse analysis.
5. Group discussions to be included.
6. Inclusion of guided writing and cloze paragraphs.

Section (III) comprised some statements which were related to teachers' views on textbooks, writing skill, learners' behavior, teaching strategies adopted at senior secondary schools of Aligarh Muslim University.

S.A.: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, D: Disagree, S.D.: Strongly Disagree, U:Undecided

STATEMENT 1: Writing helps students improve their English (structure, grammar and vocabulary).

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
87.5%	12.5%	%	%	%

STATEMENT 2: Writing prompts students to think.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
37.5%	62.5%	%	%	%

STATEMENT 3: Regular practice in writing results in academic excellence.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
100%	%	%	%	%

STATEMENT 4: Writing in English language is difficult than writing in mother tongue.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
12.5%	37.5%	50%	%	%

STATEMENT 5: Writing tends to be a frustrating and exhausting skill for students.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
%	%	100%	%	%

STATEMENT 6: Accuracy is more important in writing than fluency.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
50%	50%	%	%	%

STATEMENT 7: Reading helps students write better.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
37.5%	62.5%	%	%	%

STATEMENT 8: Dictionary is an essential tool in the writing class.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
25%	50%	25%	%	%

The next set of statements was designed to elicit teachers' response towards the course books (*Hornbill*, *Vistas*, *Flamingo* and *Snapshots*) which are being used at senior secondary level and their relevance, motivational factor, reliability, relation and impact on students.

STATEMENT 9: Textbooks deal with real world writing issues.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
0%	37.5%	50%	%	12.5%

STATEMENT 10: Tasks of writing are appropriate to learner's abilities.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
12.5%	62.5	25%	%	%

STATEMENT 11: Textbooks emphasize writing on topics related to learners' lives.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
%	75%	25%	%	%

STATEMENT 12: Supplementary textbooks have given priority to reading skill.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
%	62.5	37.5%	%	%

STATEMENT 13: Textbooks have enough space to carry out writing tasks.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
		87.5%	12.5%	%

STATEMENT 14: Writing tasks represent different genres.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
100%	%	%	%	%

STATEMENT 15: Textbooks include pre-writing and post writing activities.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
%	50%	50%	%	%

The conclusion reveals that half of the teachers agreed while the other half disagreed on the statement.

STATEMENT 16: Textbooks motivate students to practise writing.

S A	A	D	S.D	U
%	37.5%	62.5%	%	%

STATEMENT 17: Writing tasks in the textbooks are graded from simple to complex.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
%	50%	37.5%	%	12.5%

STATEMENT 18: Guidelines to carry out writing activities are well presented in textbooks.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
%	37.5%	50%	%	12.5%

STATEMENT 19: A correlation exists between supplementary and core texts regarding writing skills.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
12.5%	75%	12.5%	%	

The next sets of statements were designed to elicit teachers' perception of students' writing behaviors i.e. Students' view of writing and what initiation and adjustments they take. It also explores what motivates students to write and what hampers their writing.

STATEMENT 20: Most of the students carry out writing during examination and sessionals only.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
25%	50%	12.5%	12.5%	%

STATEMENT 21: Students tend to neglect writing tasks.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
12.5%	75%	12.5%	%	12.5%

STATEMENT 22: A difference may be seen in the written work of class XI as compared to that of class XII students.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
12.5%	75%	%	12.5%	%

STATEMENT 23: Majority of students revise their written work before submitting.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
12.5%	75%	12.5%	%	%

STATEMENT 24: Majority of students write with readers in mind.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
12.5%	37.5%	12.5%	37.5%	%

STATEMENT 25: Students prefer to write on topics which interest them.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
50%	50%	%	%	%

STATEMENT 26: A brief discussion in mother tongue motivates students to respond positively in their written work.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
%	50%	25%	12.5%	12.5%

STATEMENT 27: Inadequacy of time hampers students from taking writing skill seriously in class.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
%	62.5%	37.5%	%	%

STATEMENT 28: Group/peer work in writing bears fruitful results.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
25%	50%	12.5%	%	12.5%

The next set of statements was designed to elicit teachers' view on feedback.

STATEMENT 29: Feedback/Assessment is necessary for gaining writing skill.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
62.5%	37.5%	%	%	%

STATEMENT 30: Mistakes should be discussed in class.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
12.5%	75%	12.5%	%	%

STATEMENT 31: Assessing so many samples in the allocated period is a tough job.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
62.5%	37.5%	%	%	%

STATEMENT 32: Majority of students respond positively towards feedback.

S.A	A	D	S.D	U
%	50%	50%	%	%

(APPENDIX-A)

FACULTY QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Teacher,

This set of questionnaire seeks your response as teachers to the delivery system of writing skills at senior secondary level. Its objective is to examine an academic issue. The researcher gives you full assurance that your response will be kept strictly confidential, and will be used only for research purpose.

I thank you in anticipation for your honest and frank response.

(Tick the answer of your choice and you can choose more than one option.)

1. (a) Name (optional).....
- (b) Gender.....
2. School.....
3. Qualifications.....
4. Teaching Experience:.....

Section I:

5. When your students join class XI-

(a) Are they well versed in grammatical rules, vocabulary and sentence construction?

(i) Yes []

(ii) No []

(b) Know them, but are not able to employ it in their written work.

(i) Yes [] (ii) No []

(c) Their written work lacks cohesion.

(i) Yes [] (ii) No []

(d) Are able to come up with a coherent piece of composition.

(i) Yes [] (ii) No []

Section II:

6. Which language do you prefer for giving instructions in class?.....

7. How far is your class able to grasp lectures delivered in English?

(a) To a large extent

(b) To some extent

(c) With difficulty

(d) Not at all

8. In which skill are they not confident? Kindly specify your assessment for each skill. The following list of scales is provided:

1=Least confident 2=Less confident 3=Confident 4=Very confident

(a) Listening 1, 2, 3, 4 []

(b) Speaking 1, 2, 3, 4 []

(c) Reading 1, 2, 3, 4 []

(d) Writing 1, 2, 3, 4 []

9. Which skill according to you is most important for them? Rate your order of importance for each skill. The following list of scales is provided:

1=Most Important 2= Important 3=Less important 4= Not so Important

- | | | |
|---------------|------------|---------|
| (a) Listening | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (b) Speaking | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (c) Reading | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (d) Writing | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |

10. In which skill do they have a slower improvement as a part of the curriculum? Kindly rate your assessment for each skill. The following list of scales is provided:

1=No improvement 2=Less improvement 3=Some improvement
4=Much improvement.

- | | | |
|---------------|------------|---------|
| (a) Listening | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (b) Speaking | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (c) Reading | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (d) Writing | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |

11. How do you evaluate your students' writing skill as compared to other skills?

- | | |
|--------------------|---------|
| (a) Good | [] |
| (b) Satisfactory | [] |
| (c) Unsatisfactory | [] |

(d) Poor []

12. Do you find difference in the written work of students coming from Hindi/Urdu medium and of English medium?

(a) Yes [] (b) No []

(c) Partly Yes [] (d) Cannot say anything []

If yes, what difference do you notice.....

13. While writing, you notice your students confronting problems at various levels of writing. Rate your assessment for each level. The following list of scales is provided:

1= Most difficult 2= Difficult 3=Less difficult 4= Not so difficult

(a) At the level of vocabulary 1, 2, 3, 4 []

(b) Grammatical level 1, 2, 3, 4 []

(c) Sentential level 1, 2, 3, 4 []

(d) Drafting a coherent composition 1, 2, 3, 4 []

14. Do you make it compulsory for students to carry out each of the writing activity prescribed in the course textbooks?

(a) Always []

(b) Sometimes []

(c) Occasionally []

(d) Never []

15. Are the writing tasks prescribed in the course books (*Hornbill*) for class XI and (*Flamingo*) for class XII relevant to the future needs of students?

(a) Yes [] (b) No []
 (c) Partly yes [] (d) Cannot say anything []

16. Do you feel that writing activities prescribed in textbooks are relevant to Aligarh Muslim University context?

(a) Yes [] (b) No []
 (c) Partly yes [] (d) Cannot say anything []

Which other activities could be introduced?.....

.....

17. Before asking students to write on a topic, do you conduct some pre-writing activities?

(a) Always []
 (b) Sometimes []
 (c) Occasionally []
 (d) Never []

18. Do you consult prescribed textbooks only to impart writing skills?

(a) Always []
 (b) Sometimes []
 (c) Occasionally []
 (d) Never []

Which other books/materials do you consider to impart better writing skills?.....

.....

19. Which approach do you adopt in class to teach writing skills?

(a) Controlled approach []

(b) Free approach [] Any other:.....

(c) Communicative approach []

(d) Integrated approach []

20. How do you impart a particular writing skill in class?

(a) By your experience []

(b) By following the guidelines []

(c) By discussing it with colleagues [] Any other:.....

(d) By exploiting resources []

(Libraries, internet etc)

21. Out of the given writing sub-skills which of them do you consider as the most important for your students' future? Rate your assessment for each sub-skill by indicating 1 as the lowest and 4 as the highest. A list of sub-skills is provided:

(a) Writing essays, summary and note making. []

(b) Writing curriculum-vitae, applications and notices. []

(c) Writing letters (formal/business) []

(d) Writing sessional and examination answers. []

22. How often do you provide students with feedback?
- (a) Always [] (b) Sometimes []
- (c) Occasionally [] (d) Never []
23. What kind of feedback do you provide on the written work of students?
- (a) By offering remarks []
- (b) By using rubrics []
- (c) Marking the mistakes []
- (d) All of the above []
24. How often do you conduct follow-up activities related to writing skills you have taught in class?
- (a) Once in a week []
- (b) Once in a fortnight []
- (c) Once in a month []
- (d) Once in a session []
25. As teachers you must be facing problems in teaching writing skills. Please list some of these and provide some suggestions as to how this skill can be taught and perceived in a better way.

Problems	Solutions
1...../.....	
2...../.....	
3...../.....	
4...../.....	
5...../.....	

Section III:

26. Given below are some statements related to writing skills which include (learners, textbooks and teaching strategies) adopted at senior secondary level. Please tick the box of your choice. It will indicate your opinion about a particular statement.

SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree
U = Undecided

S.NO.	STATEMENTS	SA	A	D	SD	U
1.	Writing helps students improve their English (structure, grammar and vocabulary).					
2.	Writing prompts students to think.					
3.	Regular practice in writing results in academic excellence.					
4.	Writing in English language is difficult than writing in mother tongue.					
5.	Writing tends to be a frustrating and exhausting skill for students.					
6.	Accuracy is more important in writing than fluency.					
7.	Reading helps students write better.					
8.	Dictionary is an essential tool in the writing class.					
9.	Textbooks deal with real world writing issues.					

10.	Tasks of writing are appropriate to learner's abilities.					
11.	Textbooks emphasize writing on topics related to learners' lives.					
12.	Supplementary textbooks have given priority to reading skill.					
13.	Textbooks have enough space to carry out writing tasks.					
14.	Writing tasks represent different genres.					
15.	Textbooks include pre-writing and post-writing activities.					
16.	Textbooks motivate students to practise writing.					
17.	Writing tasks in textbooks are graded from simple to complex.					
18.	Guidelines to carry out writing activities are well presented in textbooks.					
19.	A correlation exists between supplementary and core texts regarding writing skills.					
20.	Most of the students carry out writing during examination and sessionals only.					
21.	Students tend to neglect writing tasks.					

22.	A difference may be seen in the written work of class XI as compared to that of class XII students.					
23.	Majority of the students revise their written work before submitting.					
24.	Majority of students write with readers in mind.					
25.	Students prefer to write on topics which interest them.					
26.	A brief discussion in mother tongue motivates students to respond positively in their written work.					
27.	Inadequacy of time hampers students from taking writing skill seriously in class.					
28.	Group/peer work in writing bears fruitful results.					
29.	Feedback/Assessment is necessary for gaining writing skill.					
30.	Mistakes should be discussed in class.					
31.	Assessing so many samples in the allocated period is a tough job.					
32.	Majority of students respond positively towards feedback.					

(II) ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

This set of questionnaire for students was devised with a view to extracting information from students studying at senior secondary level of Aligarh Muslim University, about their exposure to English language, particularly to writing skill. The questions ranged from syllabus, textbooks, teachers etc. to the areas where they feel motivated as well as the problems they face in their writing course. It also includes students' personal views and purpose of writing skill carried by them at schools.

The basic aim of this study is to analyze the teaching and learning of English language writing skills in Aligarh Muslim University senior secondary schools.

A set of six questions was designed to elicit students' background information. It consisted of their name, age, background, mother tongue, class, faculty and number of years they have studied English. In response to 400 questionnaires which were distributed as a set of 200 in boys and girls, senior secondary schools, 194 girls and 190 boys responded.

Total set of questionnaire= 400

Return rate= 384

[Girls=194

Boys=190]

The first part of the 2nd: question asked students about their age to which the response was:

GIRLS:

Age (Years)	Response
14	-
15	9.79%
16	31.95%
17	48.45%
18	9.27%
19	0.51%
20	-

BOYS:

Age (Years)	Response
14	0.52%
15	13.68%
16	33.15%
17	35.26%
18	15.26%
19	1.05%
20	1.05%

The second part of 2nd: question was related to their sex to which response was:

194 = Females

190 = Males

The 3rd: question was whether they come from rural or urban background, the response was:

GIRLS

BOYS

RURAL = 7

RURAL = 29

URBAN = 187

URBAN = 161

The 4th: question was related to their mother tongue to which the response was:

GIRLS:

Mother tongue	Response
Hindi	64.43%
Urdu	33.50%
Bengali	1.03%
Punjabi	0.51%
Assamese	0.51%

BOYS:

Mother tongue	Response
Hindi	53.68%
Urdu	40.52%
Bengali	3.15%
Malayalam	1.05%
Kashmiri	1.05%
Bhojpuri	0.52%

The conclusion reveals that majority of students studying at Senior Secondary levels had Hindi as their mother tongue followed by Urdu.

The first part of 5th question asked about their faculty, to which response was:

GIRLS:

Faculty	Response
Commerce	30.92%
Science	23.71%
Arts/Social Sciences	45.36%

BOYS:

Faculty	Response
Commerce	25.26%
Science	42.10%
Arts/Social Sciences	32.63%

The second part of the 5th question was related to their class to which the response was:

GIRLS:

Class	Response
XI	31.44%
XII	68.55%

BOYS:

Class	Response
XI	56.31%
XII	43.68%

The 6th question asked about their institution from where they had passed their High school.....

The 7th question was to ask students about their exposure to English as a subject i.e. How many years have you studied English?

GIRLS: (URBAN)

Years	Response
2	-
4	-
6	-
8	2.67%
10	1.60%
11	4.27%
12	39.03%
13	11.76%
14	39.57%
15	1.06%

GIRLS: (RURAL)

Years	Response
2	28.57%
4	14.28%
6	14.28%
8	-
10	-
11	-
12	42.85%
13	-
14	-

BOYS: (URBAN)

Years	Response
2	2.48%
3	-
4	2.48%
5	0.62%
6	1.86%
7	1.24%
8	1.24%
9	1.24%
10	18.01%
11	3.72%
12	34.16%
13	18.01%
14	14.90%

BOYS: (RURAL)

Years	Response
2	13.79%
3	6.89%
4	3.44%
6	10.34%
8	13.79%
10	24.13%
11	3.44%
12	24.13%

The responses reveal that majority of the students from rural background had less exposure to the English language which in turn affected their competence as compared to urban students who had 12-14 years of exposure to English.

The 8th question was “Which language your teachers use as the medium of instruction in classroom?”

GIRLS:

Language	Response
English	73.71%
English+Urdu	9.27%
English+Hindi	17.01%

BOYS:

Language	Response
English	75.78%
English+Urdu	5.78%
English+Hindi	18.42%

It reveals that majority of the teachers like to carry out their instructions in English language only.

The 9th question asked students' 'How far are you able to interpret lectures delivered in English?'

GIRLS:

Scale	Response
Large extent	58.76%
Some extent	35.05%
With difficulty	4.64%
Not at all	1.54%

BOYS:

Scale	Response
Large extent	42.11%
Some extent	51.05%
With difficulty	6.31%
Not at all	0.53%

There is a variation in the response as 51.05% of Boys were able to interpret lectures to some extent while 58.76% of Girls were able to interpret them to a large extent.

The 10th question related to their proficiency in writing skills ‘How do you judge your proficiency in English writing?’

GIRLS

Scale	Response
Good	40.72%
Satisfactory	53.60%
Unsatisfactory	5.67%

BOYS:

Scale	Response
Good	31.57%
Satisfactory	64.73%
Unsatisfactory	3.68%

It reveals that the majority was satisfied and has the proficiency to carry out writing activities recommended in their syllabus.

The 11th question asked students 'Do your teachers discuss the topic, before asking you to write?

GIRLS

Scale	response
Always	68.04%
Sometimes	27.31%
Occasionally	3.09%
Never	1.54%

BOYS:

Scale	Response
Always	53.15%
Sometimes	31.57%
Occasionally	10.52%
Never	4.74%

The majority says that their teachers always discussed before asking students to write.

The 12th question asked students 'For effective writing which of the following do you think is important?'

GIRLS:

Scale	Response
Spelling and Punctuation	3.6%
Organization	4.12%
Grammar	0%
All of the above	92.26%

BOYS:

Scale	Response
Spelling and Punctuation	8.95%
Organization	11.05%
Grammar	2.10%
All of the above	77.89%

Majority of the students are well aware of the norms of effective writing.

The 13th question asked students ‘While writing if you are not sure of a spelling what do you do?’

GIRLS:

Scale	Response
Just write it down	11.34%
Consult a dictionary	44.32%
Seek help from teachers or peers	39.69%
Drop that word	4.63%

BOYS:

Scale	Response
Just write it down	14.74%
Consult a dictionary	45.79%
Seek help from teachers or peers	30%
Drop that word	9.47%

Majority of both Girls (44.32%) and Boys (45.79%) preferred dictionary as the most reliable source for checking their vocabulary. It is also a positive sign which shows that students tend to take up writing as a serious matter and dictionary helps them more than any other source.

The 14th question was 'At what level, do you face difficulty while writing? Encircle the scale which applies to you.' The following list of scales was provided:

1= Most difficult 2= Difficult 3= Less difficult 4= Not so difficult

GIRLS:

Stages	1	2	3	4
Thinking	13.40%	24.22%	37.11%	25.25%
Organizing	7.21%	28.35%	41.75%	22.68%
Drafting	8.24%	23.71%	36.59%	31.44%
Revising	5.15%	6.18%	7.21%	81.44%

BOYS:

Stages	1	2	3	4
Thinking	14.73%	26.31%	39.47%	19.47%
Organizing	4.73%	26.84%	44.73%	23.68%
Drafting	8.42%	23.15%	41.05%	27.36%
Revising	4.21%	11.05%	21.05%	63.68%

Majority agreed that they face less difficulty when it comes to thinking, organizing and drafting and the revising stage is not so difficult in the writing process.

The 15th question asked students: ‘How do you rate your English writing classes? Tick the scale of your choice’.

GIRLS:

Scale	Response
Very interesting	23.71%
Interesting	48.45%
Satisfactory	24.74%
Unsatisfactory	3.09%

BOYS:

Scale	Response
Very interesting	24.21%
Interesting	47.89%
Satisfactory	22.63%
Unsatisfactory	5.26%

Majority of the students found their writing classes to be interesting

The 16th question was related to their interest in creative writing. Students were asked: ‘Apart from classroom activities, do you participate in other writing competitions such as self-composed poetry, short stories, essays etc.?’

GIRLS:

Scale	Response
Always	9.79%%
Sometimes	40.72%
Occasionally	27.31%
Never	22.16%

BOYS:

Scale	Response
Always	6.32%
Sometimes	43.68%
Occasionally	32.63%
Never	17.37%

The majority participates in writing competitions only sometimes.

The 17th question asked students: ‘Do you carry out writing activities suggested in your core English books (*Hornbill* for class XI and *Flamingo* for class XII) in class as well at home?’

GIRLS:

Scale	Response
Always	17.52%
Sometimes	50%
Occasionally	22.68%
Never	9.79%

BOYS:

Scale	Response
Always	15.26%
Sometimes	49.47%
Occasionally	21.05%
Never	14.21%

Students carry out only sometimes writing activities recommended in their course books.

The 18th question asked ‘Does your teacher evaluate your written composition?’

GIRLS:

Scale	Response
Always	38.14%
Sometimes	51.03%
Occasionally	8.24%
Never	2.57%

BOYS:

Scale	Response
Always	35.78%
Sometimes	41.05%
Occasionally	11.58%
Never	11.58%

Majority thinks that their teachers do not regularly evaluate their written work.

The 19th question asked students: 'How does she/he check your written samples?'

GIRLS:

Scale	Response
Collecting your assignments	18.04%
Interchanging it with peers	1.54%
Reading and asking peers to examine	53.09%
All of the above	27.31%

BOYS:

Scale	Response
Collecting your assignments	40%
Interchanging it with peers	5.78%
Reading and asking peers to examine	22.10%
All of the above	32.10%

In Boys section majority of the teachers took their written samples for correction while in the Girls section majority of the teachers asked them to read out their samples in class and asked other students to respond.

The 20th question consisted of a list of writing activities recommended in their course and they were given a scale of difficulty, according to which they were asked to measure their level of difficulty in each writing activity. The list of scale was provided:

1=No difficulty 2=Some difficulty 3=Little difficulty 4=Much difficulty

GIRLS:

1. NOTE MAKING:

Scale	Response
1	46.39%
2	26.80%
3	22.68%
4	4.12%

2. SUMMARIZING:

Scale	Response
1	34.02%
2	42.78%
3	17.52%
4	5.67%

3. LETTER WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	59.79%
2	21.64%
3	15.97%
4	2.57%

4. ESSAY WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	40.72%
2	36.08%
3	17.01%
4	6.18%

5. REPORT WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	35.05%
2	39.69%
3	17.52%
4	7.73%

6. FACTUAL WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	39.69%
2	35.05%
3	18.04%
4	7.21%

7. WRITING C.V / BIODATA:

Scale	Response
1	26.28%
2	35.05%
3	21.13%
4	17.52%

BOYS:

1. NOTE MAKING:

Scale	Response
1	41.05%
2	36.84%
3	17.89%
4	4.21%

2. SUMMARIZING:

Scale	Response
1	28.42%
2	44.21%
3	23.68%
4	3.68%

3. LETTER WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	44.73%
2	32.63%
3	17.89%
4	4.73%

4. ESSAY WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	40%
2	40.52%
3	15.26%
4	4.21%

5. REPORT WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	30.52%
2	40.52%
3	21.57%
4	7.36%

6. FACTUAL WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	26.84%
2	33.68%
3	25.26%
4	14.21%

7. WRITING C.V / BIODATA:

Scale	Response
1	27.36%
2	33.68%
3	19.47%
4	19.47%

Majority of the Boys faced some difficulty in summarizing, essay writing, report writing, factual writing and writing C.V./ Biodata and majority of Girls had some difficulty in summarizing, report writing and writing C.V./Biodata only. Note making and letter writing were the activities in which both the boys and girls did not have much difficulty.

The 21st question was 'What is your purpose behind gaining writing skills? Encircle your assessment for each purpose according to the scale given below.' The following list of scales was provided:

1=Most important 2=Important 3=Less important 4=Least important

GIRLS:

1. Requirement for academic excellence.

Scale	Response
1	41.23%
2	37.62%
3	11.34%
4	9.79%

2. Requirement for examination.

Scale	Response
1	57.73%
2	30.41%
3	8.24%
4	3.60%

3. Requirement for professional courses.

Scale	Response
1	55.67%
2	34.53%
3	5.15%
4	4.63%

4. Requirement for dealing with real life issues.

Scale	Response
1	51.03%
2	28.35%
3	13.91%
4	6.70%

BOYS:

1. Requirement for academic excellence.

Scale	Response
1	47.89%
2	40%
3	4.21%
4	7.89%

2. Requirement for examination.

Scale	Response
1	52.63%
2	37.36%
3	7.89%
4	2.10%

3. Requirement for professional courses.

Scale	Response
1	56.84%
2	32.63%
3	5.7%
4	4.7%

4. Requirement for dealing with real life issues.

Scale	Response
1	53.68%
2	26.84%
3	10.52%
4	8.94%

The next set of questions was framed regarding the four language skills:

The 22nd question asked students 'Out of the four language skills how do you evaluate yourself in each skill? Rate your assessment for each skill'.

The following list of scales was provided:

1= Excellent 2=Good 3=Average 4=Poor

GIRLS:

1. LISTENING:

Scale	Response
1	44.32%
2	38.14%
3	17.52%
4	2.06%

2. SPEAKING:

Scale	Response
1	6.84%
2	34.02%
3	48.94%
4	11.34%

3. READING:

Scale	Response
1	50%
2	42.26%
3	7.73%
4	0%

4. WRITING:

Scale	Eesponse
1	33.50%
2	45.87%
3	19.07%
4	1.54%

BOYS:

1. LISTENING:

Scale	Response
1	33.68%
2	53.68%
3	10%
4	2.63%

2. SPEAKING:

Scale	Response
1	10%
2	36.31%
3	47.36%
4	6.31%

3. READING:

Scale	Response
1	49.47%
2	42.63%
3	6.84%
4	1.05%

4. WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	23.15%
2	49.47%
3	25.78%
4	1.5%

Majority of Boys feel that they are good when it comes to listening (53.68%) and writing (49.47%), excellent in reading (49.47%) but average in speaking (47.36%) while majority of Girls feel that they are excellent in listening (44.32%) and reading (50%), good in writing (45.87%) and average when it comes to speaking skills (48.94%).

Question No 23rd 'Out of the four language skills, in which skill do you find yourself lacking in confidence? Rate your assessment for each skill'.

The following list of scales was provided:

1 = Least confident 2 = Less confident 3 = Confident 4 = Most confident

GIRLS:

1. LISTENING:

Scale	Response
1	1.03%
2	10.82%
3	54.63%
4	33.50%

2. SPEAKING:

Scale	Response
1	11.34%
2	45.36%
3	35.05%
4	6.18%

3. READING:

Scale	Response
1	2.57%
2	9.27%
3	41.23%
4	46.90%

4. WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	3.09%
2	20.10%
3	44.32%
4	32.47%

BOYS:

1. LISTENING:

Scale	Response
1	5.78%
2	11.57%
3	63.68%
4	18.94%

2. SPEAKING:

Scale	Response
1	14.7%
2	41.05%
3	33.68%
4	10.52%

3. READING:

Scale	Response
1	3.15%
2	8.42%
3	45.78%
4	42.63%

4. WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	7.89%
2	25.26%
3	41.57%
4	25.26%

Majority of Boys feel that they are confident when it comes to listening (63.68%), reading (45.78%), and writing (41.57%) but feel that they are less confident when it comes to speaking skills (41.05%). Majority of the Girls feel that they are confident in listening (54.63%) and writing (44.32%), most confident (46.90%) in reading and less confident (45.36%) in speaking skills.

Question No 24th: 'In which skill do you face a slower development as a part of your curriculum? Rate your assessment for each skill'. The following list of scales was provided:

1 = No development 2 = Less development 3 = Some development 4 = Much development

GIRLS:

1. LISTENING:

Scale	Response
1	3.60%
2	9.7%
3	48.45%
4	38.14%

2. SPEAKING:

Scale	Response
1	9.27%
2	23.71%
3	44.32%
4	22.68%

2. READING:

Scale	Response
1	4.63%
2	5.67%
3	32.47%
4	57.21%

3. WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	5.67%
2	11.34%
3	42.26%
4	40.72%

BOYS:

LISTENING:

Scale	Response
1	5.78%
2	13.68%
3	50.52%
4	30%

2. SPEAKING:

Scale	Response
1	10.52%
2	29.47%
3	43.15%
4	16.84%

3. READING:

Scale	Response
1	6.31%
2	12.63%
3	35.26%
4	45.78%

4. WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	7.89%
2	18.42%
3	47.36%
4	26.31%

Majority of Boys feel that they have achieved some development when it comes to listening (50.52%), speaking (43.15%) and writing skills (47.36%) and much development in reading skills (45.78%) while majority of Girls too feel that they have attained some development in listening (48.45%), speaking (44.32%) and writing skills (42.26%) and much development when it comes to reading skills (57.21%).

Question No 25 'According to the need of time which skill you think is the most important for you. Rate your assessment for each skill'. The following list of scales was provided:

1 = Most important 2 = Important 3 = Less important 4 = Least important Responses showed as

GIRLS:

1. LISTENING:

Scale	Response
1	11.34%
2	48.45%
3	21.13%
4	19.07%

2. SPEAKING:

Scale	Response
1	80.92%
2	10.82%
3	5.15%
4	3.09%

3. READING:

Scale	Response
1	39.17%
2	42.78%
3	13.9%
4	4.12%

4. WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	28.86%
2	33.50%
3	31.95%
4	15.67%

BOYS:

1. LISTENING:

Scale	Response
1	35.78%
2	43.68%
3	13.15%
4	7.36%

2. SPEAKING:

Scale	Response
1	81.05%
2	11.05%
3	2.63%
4	5.26%

3. READING:

Scale	Response
1	25.78%
2	44.73%
3	23.15%
4	6.31%

4. WRITING:

Scale	Response
1	42.10%
2	45.26%
3	4.21%
4	8.42%

Majority of Boys feel that listening (43.68%), reading (44.73%) and writing skills (45.26%) are important and speaking (81.05%) is the most important skill while majority of Girls feel that listening (48.45%), writing (33.50%) and reading (42.78%) are important skills and speaking (80.92%) for them is the most important skill.

These results reveal that majority of students who are pursuing their intermediate classes feel that speaking in English is a primary concern for them. They hold the view that speaking confidently in English will help them to face job interviews and prepare them for better jobs.

Following are some statements related to the skill of writing.

STATEMENT 1: Writing skill is very important for my future needs.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
48.45%	50%	1.03%	0.51%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
39.47%	57.36%	2.10%	1.05%

STATEMENT 2: Writing motivates me to think.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
43.29%	50%	3.09%	3.60%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
42.63%	45.78%	6.315%	5.26%

STATEMENT 3: Writing regularly improves my English.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
65.46%	31.95%	2.57%	0%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
63.68%	26.84%	5.78%	3.68%

STATEMENT 4: Writing skill gives me competence to improve my other skills (grammar, vocabulary, sentence construction).

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
43.29%	53.09%	3.09%	0.51%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
41.57%	46.84%	6.84%	4.73%

These four set of statements were designed in order to elicit students' response towards their motivation and needs behind learning writing as a skill. Results showed clearly in the above four statements that maximum students were motivated to gain writing skill. It helped them to think on various topics as well as gave them competence to improve on their English vocabulary, sentence construction and grammar as well.

Being a community where English is not their mother tongue students felt strange and hesitant to talk in English but writing gave them a chance to work and improve without being hesitant.

STATEMENT 5: Writing activities recommended in my course books are sufficient to improve my writing.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
12.37%	31.95%	41.23%	14.43%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
8.947%	33.68%	40.52%	16.84%

STATEMENT 6: I have noted some improvement in my writing skill after attending writing classes.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
27.31%	61.34%	6.70%	4.63%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
28.94%	53.68%	8.947%	8.42%

STATEMENT 7: Textbooks deal with real world writing issues.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
23.13%	57.48%	16.61%	2.78%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
24.48%	60.20%	13.26%	2.04%

Conclusion:

The above sets of statements were designed to elicit students' response towards their writing course recommended in their syllabus. On assessing the responses to these three statements, it seems that students are not completely satisfied with the course structure.

STATEMENT 8: Before writing, I plan and discuss it with teachers and classmates.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
16.49%	50%	23.19%	10.30%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
14.73%	47.89%	25.26%	12.10%

STATEMENT 9: While writing I consult a dictionary.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
19.58%	37.62%	31.44%	11.34%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
18.94%	37.36%	31.57%	12.10%

STATEMENT 10: Pair work helps me write better.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
51.03%	40.20%	7.73%	1.03%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
43.15%	48.42%	6.84%	1.57%

STATEMENT 11: I take risk in choosing vocabulary and grammar while writing.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
17.52%	38.14%	27.31%	17.01%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
12.10%	27.36%	36.31%	24.21%

STATEMENT 12: I always revise my written work.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
35.05%	52.57%	8.76%	3.60%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
28.94%	52.63%	12.10%	6.31%

Conclusion: Majority agreed on the statement.

These set of statements were put before students in order to find out how they approach to writing skills. What are their strategies while writing? The majority planned and revised their written work besides considering dictionaries and other materials as supplements for effective writing but only in statement No.11 that there was a contradiction as the majority of

Girls took risk while majority of the Boys disagreed it. These statements revealed that the majority took writing very seriously on.

STATEMENT 13: My teacher helps me identify my mistakes.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
38.14%	55.15%	2.57%	4.12%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
28.42%	48.94%	10.52%	12.10%

STATEMENT 14: I look forward to teachers' comments.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
37.11%	46.90%	8.76%	7.21%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
19.47%	53.15%	17.36%	10%

These two set of statements were designed in order to find out their attitude towards their teachers. The results showed that most of the

students agreed that their teachers helped them to analyze their mistakes and they were motivated by their teachers' comments and suggestions.

STATEMENT 15: I lack confidence while writing.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
8.76%	25.77%	43.29%	22.16%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
10%	30%	37.89%	22.10%

STATEMENT 16: I find it difficult to start writing.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
7.73%	43.81%	31.95%	16.49%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
9.473%	37.36%	27.89%	25.26%

STATEMENT 17: I frequently make grammatical errors.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
7.73%	46.90%	31.44%	13.91%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
10%	43.68%	35.78%	10.52%

STATEMENT 18: I face difficulty in constructing longer sentences.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
8.70%	47.93%	29.89%	13.40%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
9.473%	43.68%	33.15%	13.68%

STATEMENT 19: I know about a topic, but I am not able to organize it into a well drafted piece.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
11.85%	38.14%	32.98%	17.01%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
13.15%	37.36%	17.36%	20%

STATEMENT 20: I feel shy to show my written work.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
6.18%	13.40%	48.45%	31.95%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
10.52%	15.26%	32.63%	41.57%

STATEMENT 21: Writing is a tiresome activity.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
6.70%	43.29%	22.68%	27.31%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
11.05%	35.26%	28.94%	24.73%

These seven sets of statements were prepared in order to identify hindrances faced by students during the course of writing. Analyzing these statements it is realized that majority agreed that they faced problems in grammar and constructing longer sentences. Writing was a tiresome activity for the majority, planning and organization stages too were problematic for the majority of them.

STATEMENT 22: I write during examination and sessionals only.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
13.91%	20.10%	35.05%	30.92%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
15.79%	20.53%	36.31%	27.36%

STATEMENT 23: I do not get proper time to practise writing in class.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
10.30%	38.14%	37.62%	13.91%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
16.84%	45.26%	27.36%	10.52%

STATEMENT 24: I do not get a chance to show my written work.

GIRLS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
15.30%	27.04%	35.28%	22.38%

BOYS:

S.A	A	D	S.D
14.28%	23.46%	40.81%	21.42%

These three sets of statements were designed to find out the loopholes in the imparting of writing skills. Majority of the students agreed that they did not get proper time to practise writing in class.

Results and suggestions:

- The results have revealed that majority of the students have Hindi, followed by Urdu as their mother tongue.
- Majority of students from urban background had exposure to English language for a longer duration as compared to rural students and probably have more competence in carrying out writing tasks in a better manner. Teachers too have noted a difference in the written samples of students from urban background when compared to rural students.
- Majority of Boys have said that they were only to some extent able to understand lectures carried out in English language but majority of Girls were able to understand these to a large extent. Teachers have also agreed that students are able to grasp lectures to a large extent.
- Majority of the students have agreed that their writing proficiency is satisfactory and teachers have also agreed on it.
- The reliable source which most of the students prefer to check for spelling and vocabulary is dictionary and teachers too have agreed that dictionary is an essential tool in the writing class.
- Majority of students only sometimes participated in writing competitions, comprising essay writing, short story, self-composed poetry etc.
- Majority of students carry out writing tasks prescribed in textbooks sometimes only. Teachers have said they also sometimes ask their students to carry out these tasks.

- Majority of students confirm that their teachers only sometimes evaluated their written samples while the teachers insisted that they always provided feedback about students' written samples.
- Majority of Boys said that their teachers usually collected their written assignments for correction while majority of the Girls said that their teachers asked them to read out their written samples and asked other students to examine.
- Majority of the Boys said that their purpose of gaining writing skills is that it will help them in professional courses while majority of Girls said that it helps them to prepare better for their examination.
- Majority of students have said that it is the Speaking skill in which they are average or lack confidence and want to improve it as it is the need of time and it will help them to face interviews and group discussions in future.
- Majority have confirmed that as a part of their curriculum it is the reading skill which has much development.
- Majority of students and teachers have agreed that writing skill is a very important skill and regular practice in writing improves one's grammar, vocabulary and sentence structure and being a community where English is not their mother tongue writing gave them a chance to work and improve on their language without being hesitant.
- Majority of students and teachers have agreed that the writing tasks prescribed by the textbooks are not sufficient enough to

improve their writing skills for future and also are not much relevant in the context of Aligarh Muslim University.

- Majority of the students confirm that writing is a tiresome activity and majority of the teachers too have agreed that students neglect it when it comes to writing skills.
- Majority of students faced problems in grammar and constructing longer sentences. However majority of the Boys took risks in choosing vocabulary and grammar.
- Majority of the teachers have said that their students do know grammar, vocabulary and sentence coordination but are not able to employ it in their written samples. The reason is the background where they have been made to learn grammar without making use of it.
- Majority of the Boys agreed that they faced difficulty how to start writing and both of them agreed that they face difficulty in organizing sentences into a coherent piece though they know about the topic. Both of them confirmed that they faced no difficulty in the revising stage.
- Majority of students agreed that they do not get proper time to practice writing in class. Teachers too have agreed that they cannot go in for more writing sessions owing to time constraint.
- Majority of students and teachers have agreed that group-work motivates students. However, teachers have pointed that every time they cannot stick to group-work as the number of students is large which makes noise thereby defeating the purpose.

- Majority of the teachers have said that they always take up writing tasks in an integrated manner as they feel that each writing skill cannot be taken through a single approach.
- Majority of the teachers always carry out these skills by following the guidelines. However they have also pointed that the guidelines to carry out these skills are not well presented in these books.
- Half of the teachers have mentioned about the presence of pre-writing and post-writing activities in textbooks, while the other half has completely disagreed.
- Majority have disagreed that textbooks motivate students to practise writing.
- Majority of teachers have agreed that most of the students are seen seriously writing during examination and sessional only.
- Majority of the teachers have agreed that a difference is seen in the written samples of class XII students when compared to those of class XI.
- Majority of teachers agree that discussions in mother tongue motivates students to write in a better way.
- Majority have agreed that students write when the topics are interesting.
- From the findings it is seen that majority of students are lacking in a proper understanding of the grammar so it is suggested that a formal training in grammar should be provided at the beginning of the session to students.

- Time constraint is also one of the factors so it is suggested that some more writing periods should be allocated in the time-table.
- Teachers should make use of audio-visual aids which can capture students' interest level.
- Teachers should make it compulsory for students to maintain a file which should record the proceedings of the writing tasks carried out in classrooms.
- Teachers can choose topics of writing which seems interesting to the majority of the students.
- Authorities should make it compulsory to submit the files maintained by the students so that a serious attitude should be taken by teachers as well as by the students.
- Teachers should take up skills in a manner that it should be understood by the students and not in a manner to finish the syllabus.
- Use of mother tongue makes it easier for students to understand technicalities but much use of it should be avoided.
- Teachers should provide students with unusual topics to write on as it will help to remove the use of guides.
- Monthly follow up activities can be carried out through power point presentation.
- Teachers can make up small groups of 4-5 students and ask them to carry on with different writing tasks and later a head of each group can represent it on board.

- Teachers should discuss with colleagues and develop ways to carry out different writing skills.
- Early morning periods should be fixed for writing tasks.
- Teachers should be given a formal training by experts at the beginning of the session.

(APPENDIX-B)**Students' Questionnaire**

Dear student,

This set of questionnaire is related to 'writing skills' taught at senior secondary level. Its objective is to inquire and examine an academic issue. The researcher gives you full assurance that the information provided by you in the questionnaire would be confidential, and used only for the purpose of research.

I thank you in anticipation for providing accurate answers to the following set of questions:-

(Tick the answer of your choice)

1. Name (Optional):
2. (a) Age: (b) Gender:.....
3. Rural/Urban:
4. Mother Tongue:
5. (a) Faculty: (b)Class:.....
6. Name the institution from where you have passed your High School?.....
7. How many years have you studied English?
.....
8. Which Language your teachers use as the medium of instruction in classroom?.....

9. How far are you able to interpret lectures delivered in English?
- (a) To a large extent []
 - (b) To some extent []
 - (c) With difficulty []
 - (d) Not at all []
10. How do you judge your proficiency in English writing?
- (a) Good []
 - (b) Satisfactory []
 - (c) Unsatisfactory []
11. Do your teachers discuss the topic, before asking you to write?
- (a) Always []
 - (b) Sometimes []
 - (c) Occasionally []
 - (d) Never []
12. For effective writing, which of the following do you think is important?
- (a) Spelling and punctuation. []
 - (b) Organization []
 - (c) Grammar []
 - (d) All of the above []

13. While writing, if you are not sure of a spelling, what do you do?

(a) You just write it down []

(b) Consult a Dictionary []

(c) Seek help from teachers/parents/peers []

(d) Drop that word []

14. At what level, do you face difficulty while writing? Encircle the scale which applies to you. The following list of scales is provided:

1=Most difficult 2=difficult 3=Less difficult 4=Not so difficult

(a) Conceptualizing your piece of writing. 1,2,3,4 []

(b) Organizing your words in a text. 1,2,3,4 []

(c) Drafting these words into a meaningful text. 1,2,3,4 []

(d) Revising your text. 1,2,3,4 []

15. How do you rate your English writing classes? Tick the scale of your choice.

(a) Very interesting []

(b) Interesting []

(c) Satisfactory []

(d) Unsatisfactory []

16. Apart from classroom activities, do you participate in other writing competitions such as self-composed poetry, short stories, essays etc?

(a) Always []

(b) Sometimes []

(c) Occasionally []

(d) Never []

17. Do you carry out writing activities suggested in your core English books (*Hornbill* for class XI and *Flamingo* for class XII) in class as well at home?

(a) Always []

(b) Sometimes []

(c) Occasionally []

(d) Never []

18. Does your teacher evaluate your written composition?

(a) Always []

(b) Sometimes []

(c) Occasionally []

(d) Never []

19. How does she/he check your written samples?

(a) By collecting your assignments.

(b) By asking you to interchange with peers.

(c) By asking you to read out and peers to examine.

(d) All of the above.

20. Given below are some writing activities recommended in your course. Encircle the order of difficulty you face in each writing activity. The list of scales is provided:

1=No difficulty 2=Some difficulty 3=Little difficulty 4=Much difficulty

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| (a) Note Making - | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| (b) Summarizing- | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| (c) Letter Writing- | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| (d) Essay Writing- | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| (e) Report Writing- | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| (f) Factual Writing- | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| (g) Writing Curriculum Vitae- | 1, 2, 3, 4 |

21. What is your purpose behind gaining writing skills? Encircle your assessment according to the scale given below.

1=Most important, 2=Important, 3=Less important, 4=Not so important

- | | |
|--|------------|
| (a) Requirement for academic excellence. | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| (b) Requirement for examination. | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| (c) Requirement for professional courses. | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| (d) Requirement for dealing with real life issues. | 1, 2, 3, 4 |

22. Out of the four language skills, how do you evaluate yourself in each skill? Rate your assessment for each skill. The following list of scales is provided:

1 = Excellent 2 = Good 3 = Average 4 = Poor

- | | | |
|-----------------|------------|---------|
| (a) Listening - | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (b) Speaking- | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (c) Reading- | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (d) Writing- | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |

23. Out of these four language skills, in which skill do you find yourself lacking in confidence. Rate your assessment for each skill. The following list of scales is provided:

1= Least confident 2= Less confident 3=Confident 4= Most confident

- | | | |
|---------------|------------|---------|
| (a) Listening | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (b) Speaking | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (c) Reading | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (d) Writing | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |

24. In which skill do you face a slower development as a part of your curriculum? Rate your assessment for each skill. The following list of scales is provided:

1= No development 2= Less development 3= Some development
4=Much development

- | | | |
|---------------|------------|---------|
| (a) Listening | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (b) Speaking | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (c) Reading | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |
| (d) Writing | 1, 2, 3, 4 | [] |

25. According to the need of time which skill you think is the most important for you? Rate your assessment for each skill. The following list of scales is provided:

1=Most important 2=Important 3=Less important 4=Least important

(a) Listening - 1, 2, 3, 4 []

(b) Speaking- 1, 2, 3, 4 []

(c) Reading- 1, 2, 3, 4 []

(d) Writing- 1, 2, 3, 4 []

26. Given below are some statements related to writing skills. Please tick the box of your choice. It will indicate your opinion about a statement.

SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree SD = Strongly Disagree

D = Disagree

S.No.	Statements	SA	A	SD	D
1.	Writing skill is very important for my future needs.				
2.	Writing motivates me to think.				
3.	Writing regularly improves my English.				
4.	Writing skill gives me competence to improve my other skills (grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction).				
5.	Writing activities recommended in my course books are sufficient to improve my writing.				
6.	I have noted some improvement in my writing skill after attending writing classes.				
7.	Textbooks deal with real world writing issues.				
8.	Before writing, I plan and discuss it with teachers and classmates.				
9.	While writing I consult a dictionary.				
10.	Pair work helps me write better.				
11.	I take risk in choosing vocabulary and grammar while writing.				

12.	I always revise my written work.				
13.	My teacher helps me identify my mistakes.				
14.	I look forward to teachers' comments.				
15.	I lack confidence while writing.				
16.	I find it difficult to start writing.				
17.	I frequently make grammatical errors.				
18.	I face difficulty in constructing longer sentences.				
19.	I know about a topic, but I am not able to organize it into a well drafted piece.				
20.	I feel shy to show my written work.				
21.	Writing is a tiresome activity.				
22.	I write during examination and sessionals only.				
23	I do not get proper time to practise writing in class.				
24	I do not get a chance to show my written work.				

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

CHAPTER- FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted in order to critically analyze the learning, teaching, trends, situations, practices, factors and scope of English writing skills at senior secondary schools of Aligarh Muslim University. English as one of the subjects is made compulsory till undergraduate courses of Aligarh Muslim University and occupies an important position in the course content. The syllabus for senior secondary classes is recommended by the C.B.S.E (Central Board of Secondary Education) which is one of the national level boards of India. The board has recommended two sets of English course books by N.C.E.R.T (National Council of Education, Research and Training) at class XI (*Hornbill* and *Snapshots*) and class XII (*Flamingo* and *Vistas*). These books have given due importance to writing skills.

English writing as a skill is one of the laborious activities where students have to put in constant efforts in order to be logical. They have to make proper arrangements and explore various areas before the act of writing. Teachers and students are found to be serious when it comes to the teaching and learning of writing skills, as a wrong approach would lead to inappropriate and ineffective communication and thus defeating the purpose of writing.

Writing appears to be a neat outlay of printed or written text on page but it is never so as writing represents the most complex activities which a writer goes from jottings and sentences to a coherent piece of text. The

writer can be compared to a creator who is creating out of vague words and ideas which were lying dormant somewhere in his/her mind. Writing is a learnt skill which is acquired at later stages of one's life through a set of teaching strategies adopted in a formal setting. Almost every writing activity is a solitary activity where learners try to retrieve all that logic learnt by them in their course of learning, the more the writer is skilled the better writer he/she would be.

Writing is often said to be the visual representation of speech due to which early pedagogic approaches focused their attention on imitation and memorization of spoken sentences which were neatly copied. However, speech and writing are two different entities having their own styles and formats. Speech is ephemeral and faster while writing is a permanent source of knowledge which can be retrieved. Speech is supplemented with tone, facial features and gestures while writing is made logical through grammatical, lexical and cohesive devices.

Writing is a tool of thinking as it requires learners to solve various issues before penning their thoughts to writing. As one writes he/she has to think deeply about the purpose, the choice of sentences, vocabulary, grammar etc. then moving further he/she goes back to consider the sentences written by him/her, sometimes he/she changes whole chunks of sentences for some other sentence. This continuous overlapping of different stages of writing makes it more complex.

Writing is considered to be the authentic medium of communication as it is the written medium which goes beyond time and place and gives the reader innumerable chances to confer what the writer intends. Perhaps that is why students tend to skip writing as they feel that a wrong

endeavor would lead their copies to be marked with red or green ink. The reasons could be that today majority of the teaching fraternity tend to assess students' writing on the basis of a high degree of organization, accuracy, choice of vocabulary, grammar and sentence coordination.

Writing consists of three stages which are:

Pre-writing: Students tend to gather data for the required purpose and then plan how they are going to proceed and put the data into a logical order.

Writing: The stage where students actually take up the pen and start writing, keeping in mind the style and conventions of the language.

Rewriting: Students review and revise in order to find out mistakes or errors.

Academic writing went through many fluctuations under different approaches. The traditional or the product approach focused their attention on the end product or the final draft of the students. The writing activities comprised translation exercises and duplication of models which students have memorized in their course of learning. The dissatisfaction with this model gave way to a newer approach known as the process approach. This approach focused attention on to the process of writing and errors and mistakes were tackled through positive feedbacks. Soon this approach too had its criticism and gave way to another approach known as genre approach. This approach focused on the fact that language evolves out of a social purpose keeping in mind the conventions and norms of a particular culture and context. Students were made to understand the organizational and linguistic features reflected by a particular text type through examples and later students were asked to

acquire the features associated with each genre under the teacher's guidance. This approach is seen to comprise the features of product as well as process approach.

Writing is divided into four types which are narrative, descriptive, expository and persuasive. Narrative writing tells a story or a part of it, descriptive writing helps the readers visualize a picture of the writer's experience, expository writing provides information, explanation and clarification regarding its subject and persuasive writing intends to convince its readers.

Writing is basically approached through a set of parameters to make the written language acceptable and logical to its readers. Ann Raimes has provided a set of parameters which are- mechanics, grammar, syntax, content, the writer's process, audience, purpose, word choice, organization etc.

Textbooks play an important role in the learning and teaching of writing skills. It is the use of textbooks which creates uniformity in the classroom. The textbooks prescribed at senior secondary have claimed that they have been designed in a way that students' associate the tasks with the outside world and have maintained sharp boundaries between different subject areas. The textbook also claim that they have tried to discourage rote learning and have worked in the direction of child-centered system of education. The core textbooks *Hornbill* and *Flamingo* have given place to writing skills specifically while supplementary readers *Snapshots* and *Vistas* have focused more on reading skills and text-based questions. These textbooks are found to be partly suitable in the Aligarh Muslim University context. However it is recommended that

some coloured layout, audio-visual aids, space to carry out writing tasks and some new forms of writing skill such as e-mail writing should be included.

English writing skills play an important role in the academic development, as it provides students with the comprehensibility, fluency, ability and confidence. Majority of the teaching fraternity accept that writing itself is a difficult skill to be taught as it works on multidisciplinary function of the language thereby making it complex and a serious activity. Teaching of writing skills require careful planning and implementation of strategies specified by syllabus. Every writing class cannot be always effective as there may be other factors which directly or indirectly influence the learning and teaching of writing skills. These factors may include the context, classroom observation, teacher's and learner's attitude, short term and long term objectives of the syllabus, motivation etc.

It is found that majority of the students' have accepted that writing is an important skill in consideration to students' future needs and helps them to improve their English grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction but when compared to other skills of language majority were keen on learning English speaking skills.

Teachers have also pointed out that students were lacking in proper knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and sentence construction resulting in an incoherent piece of written text..

Majority of the teachers and students have also confirmed that the writing skills recommended are not sufficient to improve their skills in writing further, these textbooks are not much motivating to the students.

Recommendations:

- Teachers should be provided with a formal training at the beginning of each session by experts.
- A class record of the writing skills carried should be maintained and be assessed at the end of the session by the school authorities.
- Teachers should give unusual topics to the students so that use of guide books is discouraged.
- Teachers can select their own topics which seem interesting to their students.
- Group work should be promoted.
- Teachers should use audio-visual aids.
- Teachers should provide students with suitable examples of writing skills.

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